

LONDON ^{THE} READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

THE RIGHT OF TRANSLATION

[IS RESERVED.]

No. 560.—VOL. XXII.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING JANUARY 24, 1874.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[STARTLING INTELLIGENCE.]

CHRISTMAS BEFORE AND BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Maurice Durant," "Fickle Fortune," etc., etc.

CHAPTER X.

Adversity ne'er shakes the heart of honour.
He who was found a villain in distress
Was never virtuous.

Gay.

A MORE miserable man than Jack Hamilton as he sat in his elegant sitting-room on the morning after his and Lady Maud's visit to the Signet could not be found.

He had not closed his eyes all night, three bottles of soda water standing at his elbow testified to that; he felt ill and weary with disappointment and grief. Now that he felt he ought to dismiss Mary Montague from his heart he found, for the first time, how firmly she was rooted there. To pluck her from him was like tugging at the roots of his unhappiness.

"Poor girl! poor girl!" he muttered, tapping another bottle of soda water and stirring the fire between the draughts. "It is poverty or something of that sort that has driven her to it. I'll never believe that she is a hardened, wicked woman. By Jove, I can scarcely believe anything wrong of her, but seeing is believing; there is nothing to be said to a cold demonstration. I have been deceived, self-deceived, and there's an end of it."

But unfortunately for his peace of mind that was not the end of it.

He had a duty to go through. He must go to Lady Maud and confess his wrong doing, explain that it was he and not Beau who had been making himself ridiculous, and altogether make the amende honorable for his harsh speeches and general condemnation of her the night before.

It was a bitter task, but Jack was not one to shrink from duty however unpalatable it might be, and accordingly got up, thrust his forehead into a basin of cold water to freshen himself, got into his greatcoat and slowly marched downstairs; it was

not until the door was open that he remembered his hat, and with a sigh trudged upstairs for it, muttering:

"I'm very far gone, indeed, very far gone."

The park, notwithstanding the charms of the morning, looked dingy to him, and he fancied that the countenances of all he met wore a villainous expression.

Poor Jack, he forgot that he was looking through green spectacles!

Lady Maud was up, and, attired in a beautiful morning-robe, was sitting in the drawing-room hard at work—or pretending to be—upon an impossible house and surroundings in water colours.

She looked up, and shifted her paint brush from the right hand to the left to shake hands with him.

"Why, Jack," she said, "how ill you look! Have you been up all night?"

"No, that is yes; no, not exactly, but I have had a bad headache."

She guessed at the cause, but pretending ignorance rose with her stately grace and brought a bottle of eau-de-cologne from a cabinet.

"Give me your handkerchief," she said, and when he produced it she poured some of the spirit upon it.

"Press it to your forehead," she continued, and as he seemed disinclined she held it there herself for a moment. "What do you think of my sketch?" she asked, looking down at it.

"Well," he said, smiling sadly. "I should not like to live in the original without a very heavy thing in the Accident Company! That left wall is falling in rapidly."

"For shame!" she said. "I prided myself on the house too. What do you think of the trees?"

"Admirable," he said. "Life-like; that one we used to have in the Noah's Ark was nothing to these; there's a man too, but I think the Ark could carry off the palm there."

She laughed her well-bred laugh.

"You are incorrigible," she said. "There, I won't paint any more, you have made me dissatisfied with it. And what made you so dreadfully pale looking? Did you drink too much claret last night after you got home, or was it a bad cigar? Poor Jack!"

"Maud," he said, walking to the fire, which she was poking, and leaning his strong arm upon the broad mantel, "I have come here this morning to tell you—"

She looked up at his sad eyes with a sympathetic glance. He caught it and looked down.

"I have had a bitter lesson, Maud," he said, "a very bitter one, and I am feeling the effects this morning. You remember—how should you forget though?—telling me of Beaumont's infatuation for the girl we saw last night at the Signet?"

She nodded and drew the slightest shade nearer to him.

"Well," he said, "you were right on every point save one. She is unworthy of any man's love, least of all a gentleman's! She is—There, I cannot talk of her, for, Maud, it was not Beaumont who was caught by her prettiness and mock modesty but I."

"You!" she said, with admirably feigned astonishment.

"Ay, I," he said, bitterly. "And, Maud, let me tell you, I thought I really loved her, I—But no more of that, let it pass. As I said she is unworthy of any man's love, and I, like other idiots, must suffer for my folly."

Lady Maud drew nearer, and as his voice dropped with the last words she put out her white, soft hand and touched his arm.

"Poor Jack!" she breathed, in a thrilling voice of pity and something still more tender, "I pity you, Jack, but I am so glad. It would have broken my heart if you—you had been ruined—lost and ruined. It would have broken my heart!"

He looked up and met the gentle, impassioned regard of her beautiful eyes, and a sudden inspiration seized him.

"You would have been as sorry as that for me, Maud," he said, earnestly—"a stupid, worthless simpleton? you would have been as sorry as that? Ah, Maud, you are too good to me; you are too good and beautiful. Maud—" His earnestness grew eager, for she had laid her hand upon his and the warmth of it was forcing him.

"Maud," he continued, "do you care for me enough to warrant me asking you to be my wife?"

We have always been together, we know each other by heart; you know also how stupid and weak-minded I am, and I know how good, how true, how beautiful you are. Maud, be my wife! I have loved you ever since we were children. Be my wife!"

With a little sob, that if not real was most splendidly feigned, her ladyship deposited her dainty head upon his broad chest, and poor Jack, who had never deceived himself more than he was doing at this moment, pressed a kiss upon the elegantly braided top-knot, and believed that he was truly happy at last.

Then they sat down and talked, Lady Maud with a sweetly conscious air, Jack with a remnant of sadness about him.

Lady Paceswell entered, and Jack, while Lady Maud glided from the room, communicated the glad tidings.

Her ladyship was delighted and, of course, let loose her worldliness at the first sentence.

"My dear Jack, it's the very thing I have prayed for! With Maud's little income and your twenty thousand you will be so delightfully rich. My dear Jack, bless you! Oh, you have made me happy!"

Then Jack kissed her high-bred forehead, and took his leave, feeling—well, rather more composed now than happy perhaps.

He did not go straight home but wandered about the park, musing.

And so he was to marry his cousin Maud.

Beautiful Lady Maud was to be his wife.

Heigho! It was a wonderful world certainly, and things came about in the most remarkable manner, and, thinking thus, he very improperly sighed, and made for his chambers.

His servant met him at the door.

"Mr. Shallop is waiting upstairs, sir."

Jack ascended the stairs slowly and found Mr. Shallop in his armchair, with a patient look upon his face that said plainly:

"I've been waiting, waiting till I'm disgusted."

"Hullo," said Jack, "I'm sorry you have been kept, Shallop. I had no idea I should have been so long or I should have left word."

"No consequence," said Mr. Shallop. "I've lost time but you'll find it in the bill you know."

Jack laughed, but rather absently, and, pitching his hat and coat on to the sofa, sank into the opposite chair, and rang the bell.

"I was obliged to wait," said Mr. Shallop, "for it's business and important business too."

"Not a word," said Jack, "till you have had some lunch."

Mr. Shallop smiled, and presently the valet brought up a nicely arranged luncheon.

Then the two gentlemen drew up and fell to, Jack dropping off into the chair again after a few mouthfuls, but Mr. Shallop, like a wise man, enjoying the good things set before him and eating leisurely, relating scraps of gossip for Jack's amusement meanwhile.

"Do you mind smoke while you are eating?" said Jack.

"I've finished long ago," said Mr. Shallop, taking a cigar himself and removing to the armchair, with wineglass in hand. "It is superb hock, magnificent."

Jack nodded.

"We'll have another bottle up. Williams, a light for Mr. Shallop."

The valet brought the fresh bottle of hock, superintended the lighting of Mr. Shallop's cigar, and then withdrew.

Then Mr. Shallop, with a curious glance at his client, cleared his throat and said:

"Now to business, I suppose."

"Ay, cut away," said Jack, carelessly.

"First," said Mr. Shallop, "let me ask if you have done anything farther in the matter of the Montague people."

Jack, who was thinking of one of them, coloured slightly and poked the fire.

"Yes," he said, "I have engaged with the Theopian manager for an engagement for him."

"Capital!" said Mr. Shallop, rubbing his hands, quietly. "May I ask how you managed it?"

Jack then told him of his visit to the manager and the loan of the 200*l.* to Mr. Montague—told him sadly and with averted face.

"Capital," said Mr. Shallop again.

Jack looked up.

There was something in the tone that he did not understand.

Mr. Shallop's face too partook of the enigmatical in its expression.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Now I come to the important business," said Mr. Shallop. "You remember some weeks back our conversation about this gentleman, you knew nothing of him then, you know nothing more now."

"Nothing," said Jack. "I have called at his house, and seen his other daughter, poor little thing, a sweet-faced child, afflicted. Nothing more than that. No—that's a bad cigar you have there, take another one."

"Thank you," said Mr. Shallop. "Well, I do know something more."

"Yes?" said Jack.

"I know something of vast importance to you."

"To me?"

"Yes—do you owe many debts?"

Jack nodded.

"You ought to know better than I," he said.

Mr. Shallop nodded gravely.

"You are lucky even in bad luck," he said.

Jack grew impatient.

"Come," he said, "I don't understand you in the least. What are you driving at?"

"This Mr. Montague has turned out to be another man. Can you guess whom?"

"How the deuce should I?" retorted Jack, who with some little reason was getting angry.

"Well," said Mr. Shallop, "I wanted to break it gently, don't be impatient. Horatius Montague, of the Signet, is none other than Henry Paceswell."

Jack looked at him perfectly unconcerned.

"Well?" he said.

Mr. Shallop stared.

"The missing brother," he said, "the heir of the Paceswell estates. Why, man, don't you realize the catastrophe? You are penniless and in debt, with all the means profits to pay this Mr. Montague, the rightful owner!"

The cigar dropped from Jack's fingers and was burning a pretty hole in the Turkey rug; and Jack's face paled.

Mr. Shallop picked up the cigar and threw it in the fire. This action gave Jack time to recover.

"Thank you," he said, quietly, and with leisurely composure selected another from the box and lit it.

Mr. Shallop, absorbed in admiration at the heroic composure of the man to whom he had delivered this generally crushing blow, remained silent.

Jack smoked in silence for a few moments, then said, in a low voice:

"When did you find this out?"

"The other night," said Mr. Shallop. "I went, in obedience to your instructions, to see Mr. Montague and recognized him at once. To make sure I made inquiries and found that there was not the shadow of a doubt that this man you had befriended was the rightful owner of the estate you held."

"Why has he not claimed it before?" asked Jack.

"Because he knew nothing of it. He has been living out of the world. Besides, the difference of the name; had you been Mr. John Paceswell instead of Hamilton he would have traced it."

"How did you fail to find him when the search was made for him?" asked Jack.

"Because he was in Australia, and another man who had assumed his name had died and was buried there. He came back and took to this name of Montague and the theatrical profession, and so gave me the slip."

"And you say there is no doubt?"

"Not the slightest," said Mr. Shallop. "But of course you must consider whether you will oppose the claim. There is no doubt; but it is still a question if he can make good his rights before a jury."

Jack was about to interrupt him with an ominous sparkle in his eyes, but Mr. Shallop, returning to his theme, went on:

"Therefore, I say that what you have done is most lucky. Convince him—if we can—that you knew nothing of his existence and consequent right, and he will scarcely have the heart to sue a man for the means profits who had done him so much good, and who was anxious to serve him. It would be base ingratitude, and I don't think any of the Paceswells had that. Besides," he ran on, "there is another way of settling it—I mean the means profits, for they are considerable. You have had the estate some years, and it would be a tremendous sum to pay back all you have spent. The way I should recommend you to go about it is this: Go to them and put it to them that you can oppose his claim and keep him out of the estates for five, ten, or perhaps twenty years—for ever, perhaps, as he has not the money to fight a long suit through—and offer, if he will forego his claim to the money you have had out of the estate, to yield up your right henceforth, on the condition of a moderate income for yourself being deducted."

Jack jumped to his feet, white with indignation.

"Confound your impudence!" he said. "I'll pitch you through the window! Do you take me for a scoundrel?"

He advanced so threateningly that little, gentlemanly Mr. Shallop took refuge behind the sofa.

"For Heaven's sake be calm, Mr. Montague!" he implored. "I am advising you for your good, indeed I am!"

Jack with a groan and a sigh sank into his chair again, and, staring at the fire, said:

"There, there, come back; I believe you are, although you are a stupid to think I should play the dirty villain, bad as it all is. Merciful Heaven! I am without a penny in the world, and with a mountain of debt upon my shoulders!"

Mr. Shallop was about to speak again, but Jack stopped him with impatient contempt.

"There, hold your tongue and go," he said. "You can do me no good, and will irritate me until I pitch you through the window, I know. Go and make terms with the new man; I give you leave, go!"

Mr. Shallop, aware that there was a dead fall of at least thirty feet from the window, put on his gentlemanly hat, and shaking his gentlemanly head took his gentlemanly self off.

CHAPTER XI.

All other doubts by time let them be cleared.
Fortune brings in some boats that are not
steer'd. *Shakespeare.*

MR. MONTAGUE was in his dressing-room, and Mary was passing through the green-room on the way to hers, when the manager met her, and indicating a gentleman by his side with a roll of the accommodating hat, said:

"Good evening, Miss Montague; do you know where Mr. Montague is? we have been looking for him everywhere."

Mary bowed to the gentleman, who was none other than Mr. Shallop, and who had bowed his head and saluted her with the deepest respect, and replied that her father had gone to his room.

"Ah!" said the manager; "well, if you will wait here a few minutes, Mr. Shallop, Mr. Montague will be passing through, and you'll catch him."

And having caught sight of some one or something requiring his attention the manager started off.

Mr. Shallop put up his gold eye-glasses, and looked after Mary and then round about.

"Bless me, bless me!" he murmured. "What a marvellous change this will be from the green-room of the Signet to a Belgraveia mansion! How will he take it I wonder? This must be he."

And as Mr. Montague entered he made a bow and said:

"Mr. Montague, I presume."

"Er—that is my name, sir," said Mr. Montague, in his nervous way. "Do you wish to see me?"

"Yes," said Mr. Shallop. "On important business."

Mr. Montague stood irresolute.

"Important business?" he echoed.

"Yes, most important," said Mr. Shallop, leisurely taking a pinch of snuff.

Mr. Montague glanced at the clock.

"Er—my time," he said, "is not exactly my—er—own, therefore—"

"Just so," said Mr. Shallop. "Allow me to ask you have you gone by any other name?"

Mr. Montague turned pale.

"Any other name than that you now use?"

"Well, sir, and if I have," said Mr. Montague, nervously. "If—if—"

"Exactly," said Mr. Shallop, respectfully. "I understand; such a name as—Paceswell, for instance, Henry Paceswell. Pray do not alarm yourself, Mr. Montague; I am afraid, sir, I have broken my tidings too abruptly."

"But you have told me no tidings," breathed Mr. Montague, huskily and impatiently. "You have said nothing; my name is Paceswell I admit. What then, sir?"

"Nothing but that which is to your advantage, sir," said Mr. Shallop. "I beg you will not agitate yourself. My name is Shallop, I am an attorney, and—"

"Mr. Montague!" cried the call-boy.

Mr. Montague looked up at the clock with a groan and made a step to the door.

"One moment," said Mr. Shallop, going towards him, "I am an attorney, and, in fact, I came here to-night to tell you that—"

"Mr. Montague!" shouted the boy, "the stage is a waitin'!"

And Mr. Montague, breaking away from Mr. Shallop, hurried off, leaving the long-winded lawyer to murmur as he raised his eye-glass.

"Most extraordinary! Here's a man can't wait to hear that he has dropped into a fortune!"

Half an hour afterwards, Mary, who was in her room, heard her father's voice raised in a half-shriek.

Snatching a shawl from the dresser's hand, she ran into the green-room and saw her father leaning against the table, his hand pressed against his side, and his face pale and working.

Mr. Shallop had held of his arm, and was crying out for some water, which an imp had started off to procure.

At sight of Mary the old man raised his head, flushed a dusky red, and put out a shaking hand.

"Mary, come to me, come to me!"

She flew to him, and drew him towards her, but with a sudden start he looked up, raised his head, and with a smile of self-satisfied pride said, with a slight wave of his hand:

"Mary, my dear, this—er—gentleman, is Mr. Shallop, an—er—attorney. Mr. Shallop, my daughter, Miss Montague."

The gentleman bowed to the ground.

Mary stared, and, looking into her father's proud, satisfied face, thought his senses had deserted him under some sudden shock, and looked from one to the other with frightened distress.

"Don't be alarmed, Miss Montague," said Mr. Shallop, twiddling his eyeglass, "it is only a sudden faintness brought on by some unexpected news."

"Unexpected news, my dear," murmured Mr. Montague, looking round with a proud, bland air upon the small crowd oozing in at the door. "Unexpected news. Er—er—don't you think, Mr. Shallop, it would be as well to—er—to tell our friends?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Shallop, eager to gratify the poor old man's sudden pride.

"Yes, certainly. Ah, here comes the manager," he added, as that gentleman pushed his way through the throng, all anxiety as to the Pirate's health, remembering that there were still two more acts of the Pirate's Gorge unplayed.

"What's the matter? Not ill, Montague? able to play I hope?"

"Not ill," said Mr. Shallop, twisting his eyeglass and taking upon himself to answer. "Not ill, I am thankful to say, but still unable to play. Indeed, Mr.—I haven't the pleasure of your name—this gentleman ought never to have played at all. All a whim, an idle, fanciful whim, my dear sir, which I hope is now gratified, I may say satisfied."

"What's all this?" asked the manager, astounded.

"A whim, Mr. Montague—"

"Not Montague, but Pacewell, Henry Pacewell, Esq.," said Mr. Shallop; "surprised, no doubt, yes, ahem. Yet not the first time you have heard of an incognito perhaps. This gentleman for his own amusement has been playing at theatricals; quite a whim; always fond of the stage from a boy. Now important business necessitates that he should return to the rank and society from which he has, ahem, strayed. Therefore, Mr. Manager, Mr. Montague, that is Pacewell, is unable to fulfil this engagement—indeed, he will be compelled to leave the theatre immediately. Is not that correct, sir?" he concluded, turning with a great show of respect to the erect and haughtily smiling Pirate.

"Quite correct," said the weak old man, avoiding his daughter's eyes, which sought his inquiringly and even doubtingly. "Quite correct, and now, Mary, my dear, change those things." He shuddered as he glanced at her white muslin dress, and in that downward glance caught sight of his own and shuddered again. "And—I, er, will change mine," taking her on his arm to the door.

"But," said the manager, distracted at this double blow, "who is to play your parts? What is to become of me? I shall have the house about my ears, I—"

Mr. Shallop, who had been clearing a passage through the buzzing, chattering and thoroughly bewildered crowd for his two clients, stepped back and whispered in the manager's ear:

"Five hundred pounds as a forfeit will pay you for that, eh?"

And with a quiet smile followed the father and daughter from the room.

In ten minutes, while the crowd of actors and supernumeraries were hanging about and the manager was presenting himself before the audience and informing them that Mr. Montague was taken suddenly ill and that Miss Montague begged to be allowed to attend upon him, the two, father and daughter, had changed their clothes and now stood in the lobby waiting until Mr. Shallop's brougham came up.

Very pale the old man looked—very pale too Mary, for her heart misgave her that her father had been ungrateful to the manager and proud to his late fellow actors.

Tears were not far from her eyelids, and they would have dropped upon her cheek had not a sudden accident frightened them away.

Just as the brougham rattled up, Anderson, the actor, came hurrying from the stage and, all dressed as he was in his tinsel and spangles, stood breathless before them.

"You—you won't say good-bye!" he gasped. "You are going to roll in riches, in wealth, going to be grand people, and you won't say good-bye, you're so proud! Well, I'll return good for evil, I will. I'll just say a word in your ear, Mr. Montague, or Mr. Pacewell."

"Say what you have to say here, my good man," said Mr. Montague, with a condescending wave of the hand.

"Oh, very well, I don't mind," said Anderson. "It's only a word of warning: Don't you be took in, don't you fall into the trap that some one has set for you; don't you be made a fool of, Montague. There's somebody been playing the fine, generous gentleman lately—you know who I mean—mind he don't make you pay for it. Oh, of course, he hadn't any motive in view, of course not! He didn't want to carney round the man he'd robbed, of course not! He didn't want to make it all right for himself and get something into the bargain; oh, no, of course

not! Equally of course he didn't lay himself out to marry a certain person and so stick to the cash he'd kept so long out of the right pockets. Oh, no, Mr. Hamilton's a swell, and can't do any of this sort of thing! But ask that gentleman if he don't think as I do; my brother's a clerk of his and knows the whole affair, and he says as I says that the whole thing's a plant, and that your swell laid himself out to carney you and get your daughter."

Mr. Shallop, who had stood confounded by the man's knowledge, until he explained how he got it, here stepped in, hurled him back, and led, almost pushed in their turn, the father and daughter into the carriage.

As they drove off Anderson ran to look after them, grinding his teeth and muttering with a malicious laugh:

"Well, Mr. Swell, I think I've cooked your hash; if I've lost her you won't get her, and that's some comfort."

Mary, who had listened to every word, felt faint and ill, though she disbelieved the vile accusation, but on the face of the old man, as she saw it by the fitting gas lamps, there rested a look of angry suspicion.

Mr. Shallop remained silent; and so they drove home to tell Pattie of the good news, while poor Jack sat with his elbows on his knees staring at the fire, and trying, vainly, to realize the situation and contrive some means to pay his debts.

CHAPTER XII.

Improve the present hour, for all beside
Is a mere feather on a torrent's tide.
Our wills and fates do so contrary run
That our devices still are overthrown.

Shakespeare.

MR. BEAUMONT, taking into consideration the circumstances attending poor Jack's infatuation by the Montague family, and armed, as he supposed, by the intelligence of Jack's negotiations with the Thespian manager, judged that it might be a propitious time to commence his own wooing, and so the morning after Jack heard that he was a penniless man, with a mountain of debt upon his back instead of the possession of twenty thousand a year, the wily barrister paid particular attention to the brushing of his hat, and surveyed his gloves with critical satisfaction.

"Yes," he mused, as the hansom rattled him towards Lady Pacewell's villa; "yes, I will strike while the iron is hot. There can be no doubt that the acting people have thoroughly nettled Jack, and Lady Maud's hopes in that quarter are quite wrecked. I'll break it to her, and so gently that at the moment of pique which must follow she shall jump at my offer to show Mr. Hamilton that there is still another man in England."

Arguing thus, with that strange fatality which clings to all who argue with themselves, he alighted from the cab and found Lady Maud at home.

Now if he had been a man of genius in the way of discrimination he would have seen that Lady Maud showed evident disappointment when he entered, having taken his knock for that of a better man. But Mr. Beaumont was so full of his object that he forgot little circumstances, and, nothing daunted by Lady Maud's look of surprise when he entered, took his seat and commenced the usual small nothings which generally open the conventional call.

Lady Maud responded, and Mr. Beaumont began to grow nervous.

"Have you seen Mr. Hamilton lately?" he asked, suddenly, thinking it best to plunge than to stand shivering on the bank longer.

Lady Maud flushed, but managed to hide it.

"Yes," she said, with queenly indifference, "Oh, yes, he was here a few days since."

"Ah!" said Mr. Beaumont. "He has grown scarcer than ever, quite a rara avis now. I have asked him to sup with me once or twice, but always got a refusal."

"With a good excuse," said Lady Maud, who knew well enough Mr. Beaumont's little game, and all the cards he thought he had to play it with.

"No, Jack Hamilton never invents an excuse if he hasn't one, or having one doesn't care to put it forward. But I know what his excuse is, the silly rascal."

This was said with the pleasantest smile possible, but Lady Maud hid a malicious smile behind her handkerchief, and did not reply.

Mr. Beaumont grew more nervous. He had expected a little help from the queenly beauty, but Lady Maud refused to help him.

"By the way," he said, "have you seen the new beauty?"

"Which one?" asked Lady Maud, placidly.

"There are so many, you know."

"Oh, I mean the actress," said Beaumont, "Miss Montague."

"Yes," said Lady Maud.

It was so different an answer to that which the schemer had expected that he started.

"You have!" he said.

"Yes," she said, "Mr. Hamilton took me the other night."

"What?" said Beaumont, astounded at this revelation. "By Jove, he has plenty of courage. And do you approve of the match, Lady Maud?"

"What match?" asked Lady Maud, blandly.

"The—the match between Mr. Hamilton and Miss Montague."

"I have not heard of it," said her ladyship, enjoying his confusion.

"Oh," he said, "I thought you were posted up in the latest intelligence. It's going the rounds that poor old Jack means to marry Miss Montague, the actress of the Signet. He has procured a West-end engagement for the father, and visits at their house."

Lady Maud shrugged her shoulders.

"I think you are misinformed," she said.

"No," said Beaumont, "I think not. It is a strange affair, and I am not surprised that Jack has kept it from you. Ah! how infatuated he must be, Lady Maud, how infatuated."

This was accompanied by a glance that said plainly, "To pass over such a pearl as you for such a nettle as she."

Lady Maud understood it, and cast down her eyes.

Mr. Beaumont drew a little nearer.

"Lady Maud," he said, in a lower voice, "I did not call this morning to talk of poor old Jack's affairs, but my own."

"Yes," she said, pulling at a hothouse flower, "your own."

"My own," he repeated. "Dear Lady Maud, I am like that flower in your hand. You can pull my life to pieces, and scatter it to the winds, or with a word preserve it to love and adore you. Oh, Maud, forgive me if I speak abruptly. I have rehearsed these few words a hundred times. Each time my heart has throbbled near you these words, 'I love you,' have trembled on my lips. If they have not spoken from my eyes it is because I dared not offend you by uttering them even in a glance. Maud, I love you. I have loved you since the first moment we met. I have worked hard and patiently that I might not bring my love empty-headed. I am a rich man, or nearly so, and I can give you, Maud, a position, far beneath your worth, 'tis true, but one in which you will shine gloriously. I lay my life, my love, all I possess, my ambition, my hopes of future success at your feet. Will you stoop and take them?"

Now this was a very pretty speech, and Mr. Beaumont knew it; had he not rehearsed it, as he had said, a hundred times? It was a speech that would have awed a jury to tears; it ailed Lady Maud to smiles.

Looking up into the bent face, Mr. Beaumont detected the smile and turned pale.

"Well," he said, hastily, "will you not give me a reply? Say yes, dear Lady Maud! Say yes."

He attempted to take her hand, but with a haughty gesture she drew it from him.

"Mr. Beaumont," she said, "I ought to have stopped you, but I really did not know what you were going to say. How could I? You were so sudden. What you ask is impossible."

"Impossible," he echoed, "why?"

"Because," she said, slowly, fixing her eyes upon him and enjoying his look of consternation and chagrin, "because I am engaged to marry Mr. Hamilton."

"What!" he breathed, inaudibly, rising from his chair and confronting her with a face in which mortification and incredulity struggled for predominance.

"Going to marry Jack Hamilton!"

She inclined her head and did not try to hide the mockery in her eyes.

"But—but," he stammered, "his engagement with the actress—"

"It has no farther foundation than other idle reports," said Lady Maud, unmercifully.

"But," he argued.

She stopped him.

"It is a mistake, sir," she said; "and I must confess that I feel some astonishment at the credence which so able and clever an individual as Mr. Beaumont seems to have given it. Mr. Hamilton has taken some interest in Mr. Montague it is true, but the motives, far from being those you suppose, spring simply from his benevolence. I trust you will let slip no opportunity that may occur of denying emphatically any repetition of the rumour that may find tongue in your presence."

Mr. Beaumont was literally staggered. Her ladyship had no doubt discovered the pretty little plot and turned the tables upon him.

He little suspected that her ladyship had been indulging in a little plotting on her own account, and that the contest between them had stood thus: whether he should win Lady Maud or Lady Maud should win poor old Jack, and that her ladyship's tact had won the battle.

It was a heavy blow for him, and he showed that

he felt it. He took up his hat and looked round the room.

"I do not understand it," he said, huskily: "that Jack was hard hit with the Montague girl I am ready to stake my life. But I congratulate your ladyship. He is a better man than I am."

Lady Maud murmured an audible assent that made his blood boil.

"At any rate," he added, bitterly, "he has the advantage of his twenty thousand a year, and if money is the key to happiness then, Lady Maud, you may comfort yourself in procuring it."

She inclined her head with a sweet smile.

"Thank you very much," she said, as if his congratulation had been most genuine and in the best possible taste. "Lady Pacewell will be down presently."

"Thank you," he said, hurriedly, "I don't think I must wait this morning," and bowing over the tips of her fingers he hurried from the house, certainly as full of hate as he had been of love when he entered it.

Poor Lady Maud, she sat down and enjoyed the picture of this gentleman struggling in the pit he had himself dug, but she little contemplated the grave to her own hopes which was or had been already dug.

She waited complacently for Jack's appearance but he did not come.

The fact was that although anything but deficient in courage Jack Hamilton could not summon up fortitude enough to carry him round to the villa and be the bearer of his own bad news. He knew, or had some slight suspicion, of the manner in which Lady Maud would take them, and overwhelmed by the prospect before him he sat and stared at the fire, not even venturing to ring for soda and brandy, reflecting that that cheering mixture, with the horses, etc., was really not his to ask for.

So he sat over the fire late into the night, stirring only to get a piece of paper and reckon up the debts which he had incurred in the belief that he was a wealthy man.

The magnitude simply stunned him.

"Why," he groaned, "I can never pay these, and there still remains the accumulation of the interest which I have spent."

Then he fell to thinking of Montague.

"I wonder how he took it; of course Shallop has told him before now. I'd give half I owe to see how he takes it, and little Pattie, and—and Mary."

At this last word, forgetful of his engagement to the queenly Lady Maud, he sighed.

"Well, well," he muttered, "all the wealth won't wash her white again, poor girl! Perhaps it all came of her poverty. I can't believe that such a sweet little thing as that, with eyes that look as sweet as a child's, would have gone wrong of her own accord. Poor girl, poor girl!"

Then with the poor girl's face in his mind's eye—notwithstanding Lady Maud—he went to bed.

(To be continued.)

TIDY NAMES.—So far as names of places are concerned, the Singalese language certainly stands in the front rank of all spoken tongues. In the Veyalooa district there is a village termed "Gallipoodundacirracoomhena." And another hamlet close by is styled "Keenoolagagolleepoodama." A few more are "Onsekellapoodamakanda," "Boodoo-gykondegamowa," "Kittoolanebaderangallo," "Foodemartouncepella," "Ginegattoccepellaamblam," "Poolgahagederagamwa," "Kandettaman-kaddegamowa," "Galendacapejakkooowecoolo," "Gallapudicellacaddawatte," and so on!

THE WHITE LADY OF BERLIN CASTLE.—The White Lady has lately been seen at the Castle in Berlin, according to goseips. The legend of the White Lady of Berlin Castle is this: Many, many years ago there was a Hohenzollern princess, a widow with two children, who fell in love with—"became enamoured of"—is perhaps a more courtly phrase—a foreign prince, rich, handsome, and brave. She sent him a proposition of marriage. But this brave and handsome prince declined her suit, explaining that "four eyes" stood between him and acceptance. He referred to his aged parents, whom he was unwilling to leave, or whose consent he could not obtain—the versions of the legend vary a little here. But the princess understood him to refer to the four eyes of her two children; to his unwillingness, in fact, to become a stepfather. So, like Richard the Third, she promptly suffocated the infant obstacles and wrote to her lover that the way was clear. He was stricken with horror at the cruel deed. He revealed her fatal mistake to her, and died cursing her bloodthirsty rashness. The princess in her turn was overwhelmed with remorse. After lingering a day or two in indescribable anguish she too died and was buried under the old castle at Berlin. But not to rest quietly in her unhappy grave. At rare intervals she appears at midnight, clad in white, gliding ghostlike about the castle, and the apparition always forebodes the

death of some member of the Hohenzollern family. The White Lady has been seen three times within about a year; once in October, 1872, just before the death of Prince Albrecht; last spring again to announce the death of Prince Adalbert; and the last time while Queen Elizabeth lay on her death-bed. There is, however, some doubt about the meaning of the last visit. The Queen Dowager was not a born Hohenzollern, and the doctors are not certain that her death can be regarded as the answer to the White Lady's appearance. If not there is yet another victim to be expected, and the superstitious know what that means. The professors of the university are trying to solve this knotty problem.

BEGIN ANEW.

THE Old Year goes; the New Year comes—

All hail its first-born day!
While Boreas beats on icy drums
His Arctic reveille.

The snow on many a hill lies white,
The merry chimies ring clear—
Ring to the Old a last good night;
Ring, Hail to the New Year!

Ho! tired and heart-sore traveller,
Hard is the load you bear—
You deem it heaviest by far

The aching heart can wear;
But thousands, man, have borne it
too—

Have borne it and kept heart,
As many thousands more shall do
Who act the hero's part.

Shake off your griefs, shake off your
doubt—

Begin anew, this morn;
Drive all your dark forebodings out,
And welcome Hope new-born.
The Past is dead; the Present lives—
The New Year is begun;
Oh, hail the light that Promise gives
From its now-risen sun!

Ofttimes the yoke seems heavier,
man,

Because we make it so,
By losing faith in what we can,
With courage, surely do.
Oh, brave is he who ever strives
To wear a smiling face!

Who knows that labour honour
gives—

That sloth is deep disgrace.

So, while the bells are throwing out
Their welcome to the year—

While ring the merry laugh and
shout,

Cast off your frown and tear.

This is the time for fortitude,
For hope and courage, man,
The hour 't'enlist among the good,
And try to reach the van.

Start out with Honour for your guest,
With purposes anew,

Determined e'er to strive your best
The New Year's work to do,

Let sorrow pass, let joy arise,
In effort put your trust,

And learn, by triumph true and wise,
That He is always just. C. D.

THE PRESERVATION OF MEAT.—A novel experiment is now on trial with regard to the artificial preservation of meat in the shape of the importation to this country, from Canada, of the carcase of an ox preserved entire in ice. The animal was killed two days before the departure of the steamer "Scandinavian," and was shipped on board that vessel for Liverpool. A telegram from Mobile to the consignee announced the ox to be in excellent condition.

OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE BOAT RACE.—At a meeting of the Cambridge University Boat Club, held recently at the "Harp Hotel," Cambridge, Mr. James B. Close, the president, reported that he had received the challenge from the Oxford University Club to row the thirty-first annual boat race on the Thames in the ensuing spring. The challenge was at once accepted, and the meeting proceeded to consider matters relative to the proposed Goldie Memorial Bridge.

MARRIAGE OF THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH.—Some grand festivities will take place at Windsor Castle upon the arrival there of the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh. They are not expected to come to town till April, and will then reside at Buckingham Palace. The following royal personages are expected at St. Petersburg for the marriage of Prince Alfred and the Grand Duchess Marie: The Prince and Princess of Wales, Prince Arthur, the Duke of Cambridge, the Duke of Coburg-

Gotha, the Crown Prince and Princess of the German Empire, Prince and Princess Ludwig of Hesse, Prince Alexander of Hesse, Princess Mary of Baden, and Prince Wilhelm of Wurtemberg. On or about the 27th inst. the newly married couple will be entertained at a great ball at Moscow by the local nobility, the St. Petersburg nobles intending to anticipate their brethren in the ancient capital with a similar festivity. The nobility of Kasan have ordered of M. Ovtchinnikov, the famous Russian jeweller, a golden punch-bowl with twelve goblets, the whole adorned with legends in Slavonic characters. The new ballet which is to adorn the St. Petersburg programme of the marriage week is being daily practised, and promises to be one of the most gorgeously effective displays of its kind. The Duke of Edinburgh has been graciously pleased, on the part of the Grand Duchess Marie and himself, to accept an invitation of the Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress to a grand ball at the Mansion House, to be given in honour of the forthcoming marriage of his Royal Highness. The day has not yet been fixed for this civic compliment, but it will probably be towards the middle of March.

SAFFRON GROWING IN FRANCE.

The production of saffron is considerable in France, but it is confined to three departments, of which Loiret produces the largest amount and of the best quality. It is a peculiar industry, and little known even in France.

A saffron field is not in full bearing till the end of the second year, and at the end of three years it is exhausted, and, according to the local proverb, the land is then so poisoned that it cannot be used for the same purpose for fifteen or sixteen years more. The average crop of the second and third years is various, from ten to thirty kilogrammes per hectare, or from 9 to 27 lbs. per acre, of dry pistils; each acre produces about six to seven hundred thousand bulbs, and each bulb two or three flowers. About 30,000 flowers are required to produce two pounds of fresh pistils, which when dried are reduced to one-fifth of that weight; the pistils are the only productive portion of the flower, the rest is waste.

The labour of picking such enormous quantities of flowers by hand is great, and when the crop is large and labourers scarce the flowers are carried into the villages and small towns round about, to be picked by women and children at home; in such cases all the world is busy saffron picking; artisans, shopkeepers, gentlemen, and ladies all assist in the work, the poor working for their own profit, the rich for the benefit of the necessitous. The farmer has to pay from about 10d. to 4s. a pound for the picking, according to the abundance of the crop.

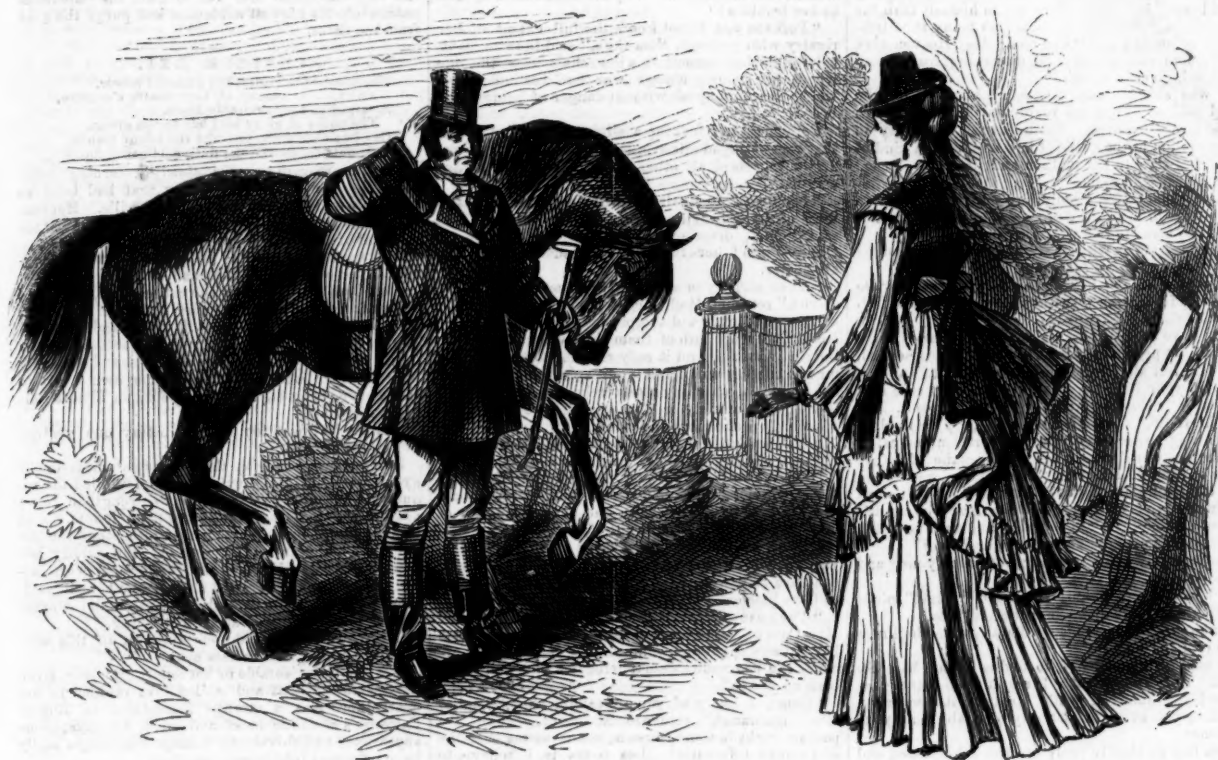
When the pistils are separated they have to be dried, and this operation is effected by placing about a pound of fresh pistils at a time in a horsehair sieve suspended over a little charcoal furnace. As soon as it is dry the saffron is ready for sale. Commercial travellers generally buy up the saffron, which goes by the name of the most famous district, Gatinous, principally for Germany, where it is said to be mixed with Spanish saffron and resold as a German product.

Saffron requires a peculiar soil, and the land which suits it is worth three to four pounds per acre, or double the rent of ordinary land in the same district; but the saffron itself sells, on an average, for thirty shillings to two pounds per lb., and when very fine for double those rates; in very extraordinary years, which, however, occur only once or twice in a century, saffron is worth as much as 8s. per lb. Altogether it is an interesting example of agricultural industry.

MR. JOHN PETTIE, A.R.A., has been elected R.A., in the place of the late Sir Edwin Landseer.

THE LAWRENCE SCHOLARSHIP.—His Grace the Duke of Bedford, being desirous of marking his sense of the services of Lord Lawrence, and of the Board over which his lordship has presided, has made a donation of 1,000*l.* to the "Lawrence Scholarship" fund. This scholarship, which is open to girls as well as boys, is one of five which have now been placed in the hands of the School Board for London to enable children to pass from the public elementary schools of the metropolis to schools of a higher grade.

AN ARISTOCRATIC PILGRIMAGE.—The aristocracy of the Faubourg St. Germain are organizing their annual pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The expense per head, including return ticket and first-class accommodation, is estimated at 5,000 francs, and this independent of the subscriptions collected to defray the expenses of a certain number of clergymen. It is ever remarked that after every annual pilgrimage several noble ladies decide to take the veil. Indeed, matrimony among the fair members of the old nobility is at a discount.



[BAD NEWS.]

SHIFTING SANDS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Elgiva; or, the Gipsy's Curse," "The Snapt Link," "The Lost Coronet," etc., etc.

CHAPTER LX.

Yet say I could repent, and could obtain
By act of grace my former state: how soon
Would height recall high thoughts; how soon
uneasy

What feigned submission swore? Ease would
recant

Vows made in pain as violent and void;
For never can true reconciliation grow
Where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so
deep.

THERE was a deep silence for some moments when those strange words had been uttered.

Even Adèle gazed in bewildered surprise at the speaker, as if in some restless suspicion that the senses of her presumed aunt were in a measure stultified by the remarkable events that had marked the last few months.

And Lord Treville glanced from one to the other of the personages in the scene with a questioning and perhaps ill-pleased surprise.

"What do you mean, woman?" said the earl, sharply. "If this—young lady" (it was out of the question to call that fair, refined creature by any other appellation) "if this young lady is not my child who is? There is but one alternative. It must be a son—it must. Gracious Heaven!" he continued, in a low, suppressed tone, "the victim of my rashness."

"By no means, my lord," returned the woman, calmly. "There were three children brought up by my care, one of them I confess was your own, but which one is a very different question, and it is that I am here to answer."

"Speak, woman, speak," gasped the earl, "which is it whom you assign to me of these pupils of your education?"

"That is what I am about to prove to you, Earl of Treville," returned the woman. "That wayward girl," pointing as she spoke to the listening, silent Cora, "was brought to me as a mere child and were my life depending on it I could not pronounce on her birth or history before my son took charge of her like an impetuous lad as he was. And, for Rupert, I have but to claim him as my son to finish all speculation on his behalf. There is one however, my lord, who is as fair and sweet as you can desire. I had hoped to secure her for my Rupert, to ensure him all the wealth and station she could bring before I revealed to either of them the truth."

"And she refused?—she shrank from the mésalliance?" eagerly interrupted the earl, his eyes flashing eagerly as he turned to the fair girl.

"By no means, my lord. She would have been to the utmost ready and willing to obey my wishes and wed the companion of her girlhood," returned Mrs. Falconer, calmly. "It was Rupert, my son, who was reluctant and ungovernable. Perhaps your lordship can guess the reason," she added, with a significant smile. "There might be some attractions that quite eclipsed your own daughter's in his eyes."

"And you mean to convey that in order to aggrandize your son you actually dared to bring about if possible a marriage between him and my daughter?" said Lord Treville, chokingly.

"Every parent is, at least most parents are anxious to do the best possible for their children," was the composed answer.

"At the expense of justice and truth," said the earl, bitterly. "However, happily, it is over now, if indeed you are honest in bringing me this young girl as the child of my unfortunate Bianca. Why have you hitherto obstinately refused all information?" he went on, doubtingly.

"That is soon explained. I waited to win the object of my long-cherished plans. It failed, as your lordship knows better even than ourselves, and my resolution was taken."

There was a pause, a dead, breathless pause.

"Surely, for once, the doctrine of 'rapport' utterly failed."

There was no sympathy between parent and child, albeit the latter fixed a wistful gaze on the aristocratic parent she was bidden to claim.

But the earl could discern no resemblance in that fair, piquante creature to the object of his early love and grief. And Cora gazed with a degree of interested surprise which almost smothered, at the time, her own personal griefs.

Mrs. Falconer was the first to speak.

"I suppose your lordship is prepared to receive your daughter after your inquiries in her behalf?"

"I—yes—so soon as I am satisfied," was the faltering reply.

"That is soon accomplished, my lord," returned Mrs. Falconer. "There is the certificate of my son's birth, from an undoubted and disinterested source. And, as to Adèle's, it must be patent to your lordship that no such precaution was likely to be taken."

She held out a paper to the earl as she spoke. It was clear and regular in form.

The certificate of the birth of a son to Alexander Falconer and Margaret his wife was set forth in the usual legal phrase.

Rupert must inevitably be their son.

The Earl of Treville's faint hopes of an heir to his estates and house must at once be relinquished, and the alternative of acknowledging a fair and unknown and unloved daughter alone remained to the Earl of Treville.

And what a fate he prepared for the only child of his brother!

The son of a plebeian sailor and his wife, the ill-brought-up pupil of a scheming woman, one who had actually rejected his own child, was the affianced bridegroom of the orphan heiress—and by his own scheme, by his own command, to punish the lovely, untrained, spoiled girl committed to his guidance and protection by his dead brother's confidence.

It was a painful remorse that clouded the nobleman's brow when he at length raised his head and revealed his pale, grave features.

"Mrs. Falconer, this must be inquired into," he said, calmly. "There has been too much deception, too long and unpardonable concealment on your part for me to attach instant credence to your tale, albeit I confess there seems reason to believe in its truth. Meanwhile you will, with this young girl whom you bring to me as my daughter, remain in my house, under the condition that no word is dropped of your claims on my—my hospitality. One hint of that kind and I may be driven to discard what you are so anxious for me to establish."

"I can wait, my lord, I can wait," said Mrs. Falconer, calmly. "Pray what is to become of this young woman in the meantime? Is she also to be your lordship's guest?"

"She and yourself may find room in my mansion," said Lord Treville, with a touch of haughtiness in his tone. "And I have full means of ascertaining what goes on in the house, even while apparently absent from the scene. But with this, Mrs. Falconer, you have nothing to do—nothing. It is enough for you if your own affairs are arranged by my management in the meantime, and you will certainly be quite as comfortable in my villa as in the cottage at Boulogne."

The earl rang the bell as he spoke with a mortifying air of decision.

Ponsford appeared with perhaps suspicious suddenness.

"Ponsford, have apartments prepared for Mrs. Falconer and her daughter in the new wing of the villa," said the earl. "And you had better choose some servants in whom you can trust to attend them. Also let Miss St. Croix be placed under the constant care of the maid who accompanied Miss Carew from England, and who will probably have some remem-

brance of her, till I have leisure to consider the action to be taken for each respectively. It is a singular Providence," he observed, rather to himself than his companions, "that has collected so many thus intimately connected under one roof. May Heaven give me wisdom and guidance in discerning truth from falsehood, good from evil."

It was strange and unwonted humility for the proud earl, and Ponsford involuntarily stole a glance at his lord's features. But he dared not delay in the execution of the earl's orders, and, with a kind of significant sign to the mother and daughter, he led the way from the room.

"I will send Mrs. Ferny, my lord," he said, "to take charge of Miss St. Croix; and in a few minutes all will be arranged as your lordship desires."

Cora was alone with the earl once more, and he hastily turned toward the silent figure.

"Do you believe in this tale?" he asked. "Do you think from your own experience that Mrs. Falconer is telling the truth?"

Cora gave a half-bitter smile as she returned: "I do not pretend to discern truth from falsehood, my lord. But all I do feel and know is that I have no claim on your lordship as a parent. I am sure that every event, every instinct of my life disproves it. But, Lord Treville," she added, earnestly, "I do implore you to weigh every proof with deliberation and calmness before you accept or reject the claim of either Adele or Rupert Falconer. It would be dreadful to keep either of them unjustly from such rank, such blessings as you could offer to them. And who can tell the truth when there are so many and such powerful circumstances contending for your decision?"

It was a remarkable warning from such young and inexperienced lips.

"Oh, wise young judge! A second Daniel!" might well have burst from the long-tried recluse.

But he simply bowed his head with grave kindness as he replied:

"I am not accustomed to undue haste, Miss St. Croix. Had I been rash I might well have condemned you unheard, while I am, on the contrary, affording you every opportunity of establishing your innocence."

Cora had no time to reply ere the door opened and Margaret entered with a reticent and dignified air that she could well assume at pleasure.

"Your lordship has commands for me," she said, respectfully.

"Yes. Let this young lady be properly tended," he said, briefly. "It is enough for her to give her word that she will make no effort to leave the house, nor even her room, without notice. But I also wish that she should be properly protected against any intrusion from without and also supplied with every comfort and treated with proper respect."

Margaret gave a kind of dignified courtesy in token of obedience, a reticent manner that well suited the earl's mood. Then she turned to the girl herself and signed to her to follow.

Cora gave a gracefully respectful bend of her head to Lord Treville as she quitted the room that once again seemed to recall to him that singular likeness which had before so perplexed him.

"Every look, every gesture, that haughty grace of mien has something which brings her to my memory," he mused. "And yet it is impossible—utterly impossible. Every fact militates against it. It is but that my mind has been so bent on that period of life, and I have been such a recluse that I forget what is the usual aspect of a young and lovely girl."

Meanwhile Margaret had led the way to a small but pretty chamber in the very inmost part of the wide and straggling villa, which looked out on a small garden that in many houses would have been devoted to the especial use of the lady of the mansion.

There was an air of refinement in the whole arrangements of the apartment which was at once soothing to the girl's taste and an earnest of respectful and considerate treatment.

Margaret surveyed her with an earnest, keen attention that well nigh brought the blood to the delicate cheeks as she turned with a sort of haughty bashfulness from such a fixed examination.

"What spell have you, girl, about you that you should thus sway men at your pleasure, even the noblest of the land and the sternest of hermits, like my lord and his brother?" she asked, after a pause.

Cora quickly seated herself in a chair near the fire which was blazing on the hearth.

"That of innocence, I suppose," she said, coldly. "I, at least, neither have nor wish to have any other power over them. I ask but peace after all that I have suffered."

"Do you not wish to humble Miss Netta?" said Madge, with a furtive glance at the thoughtful face of the young girl.

"None," said Cora, "none. What would it avail? She has suffered much already from my unconscious fault. I would not willingly work her any more harm,

even though she has no good will to me or others in whom I am interested. Why should I desire to add to her troubles?"

"Perhaps you do not know the full extent of her rivalry with yourself, Miss Cora," said the attendant, calmly placing herself in a low chair near the one where her young charge was half reclining, and where she could speak without danger of being overheard.

Cora could not forbear a slight flash of interest that was betrayed alike in eyes and cheeks, but she firmly repressed all other outward evidence of her emotion.

"I know of no rivalry that can exist between the niece of Lord Treville and an obscure orphan," she said, coldly, drawing the mantle she wore more closely round her form, as if a sudden chill had seized her.

"Then either you are false or I am entirely deceived," returned Madge, composedly. "If I do not err, the past lover and the present accepted suitor of Netta Carew are both of them closely connected with Cora St. Croix. And it only remains to be seen how far her success will crush your spirit, young lady," she went on, watching attentively the varying and ill-concealed anxiety on Cora's expressive features as she slowly pronounced the words.

"Is Miss Carew going to be married then?" said Cora, steadying her voice, "and to whom?"

"Ah, that is exactly the question," said Margaret. "Can you not guess from what I said just now that the choice must lie between the supposed suitor of Mr. Carew's heiress and the fickle lover of the foundling Mr. Carew adopted as his own? Which do you guess? Which one would you wish should be snatched as it were from your path?" she continued, as Cora listened with parted lips.

"They can neither of them be fitting husbands for Miss Carew," said Cora, quickly. "She could not wed her father's involuntary murderer, and Rupert Falconer can be no suitable match for her, rich and nobly born as she is."

"Come, I am glad you are candid enough not to affect ignorance," returned Margaret. "You are perhaps right in some respects, but it seems that the earl thinks differently. Miss Netta is, I believe, to be married to Rupert Falconer before many weeks or perhaps days are over. And in one way it may be called a triumph, for I fancy she is not the only nobly born, wealthy heiress who would give all her possessions to the handsome adventurer."

"He is no adventurer," said Cora, indignantly; "he may be unjust, fickle, even cruel in his treatment of those who little deserve it, but there is not one particle of selfishness or mercenary baseness in his nature."

"Then you still love him; you would gladly marry him," said Margaret, sternly.

"No, I would not. I could not trust where I had not been in turn trusted," replied the girl. "But I do not know what right you have to question my secret feelings, Margaret. If your news is true, I wish them happiness from my heart, but I do not even hope for it. It is too disproportionate in everything—everything," she went on, musingly.

"Then why should you not stop it at once?" said Madge, insinuatingly.

"If I could I would not," was the impatient reply. "Yet it does seem hard, very hard," she murmured, "that some should have all and others nothing."

"Wait a little, wait a little," said Madge, with a kinder air. "If you will but trust me and give yourself to my guidance, you shall gain the summit of the ladder while Netta Carew and those more exalted will be at the very foot. Are you content to place yourself in my hands?"

"I will not do anything blindfold," returned the girl, firmly. "I have been in a very labyrinth of mystery and deceit all my life. I am weary of it. I had rather sink into the lowest depths and be at peace than struggle on in this miserable, dark network of evil passions and base intrigues."

Margaret looked at her white, determined features, that spoke of the suffering the resolve cost her, and her own mood seemed to vary from anger to admiration.

"You are obstinate and self-willed, but you are at least brave and true," she said, "and worthy of a better fate than you have chosen. However, it is not always that noble blood brings noble feelings."

And she rose from her seat and after making a few brief arrangements in the room she silently quitted it, turning the key as she closed the door.

Cora's reflections were sufficiently bitter as she was thus left to their undisturbed indulgence.

Rupert Falconer prosperous and wealthy and happy with a nobly born young wife; Adele the acknowledged daughter of an earl; and she, the lone, the brave, the true-hearted, was thus abandoned to a desolate fate, perhaps to disgrace.

It was a bitter contrast, but, as so often happens,

that galling comparison, that sad heart sickness was the very discipline that was to train the impetuous nature into its highest nobleness and purge the gold from the dross.

CHAPTER LXI.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await alike the inevitable hour.
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.
Can honour's voice provoke the silent breath,
Or flattery soothe the dull, cold ear of death?

MARIAN BIDDULPH was slowly returning home from the visit to Netta Carew that had been so anxiously entreated by the Earl of Treville. Her face wore a cold, bitter expression that had become but too habitual of late with the heir-as of the Biddulphs.

She seemed doomed to disappointment and neglect, in her own wayward ideas.

And Cora St. Croix was the cause of all, Cora had drawn from her the lovers she had most prized in early girlhood and more mature years, and now the young, frivolous butterfly Netta was actually to be forced on the acceptance of the penniless and obscurely born stranger who had attracted her own heart in the rebound from its first great shock in Ernest Balford's desertion.

Yet she had been too proud to betray one vestige of such sufferings.

She had listened with the utmost calmness to the explanations of Lord Treville, she had fulfilled the request he had proffered so far as to strengthen Netta against her wavering fancies and fitful doubts. And though she did not steel herself altogether for the office the earl entrusted of her yet she quietly left it in abeyance, as if bridal and bridegroom were utterly indifferent to her, and she, as she herself said, must only depend on her father's health and consent for her presence at the intended wedding.

Yes, Lady Marian had gone through all this with unmoved aspect and tearless eyes.

Yet she felt miserable in her lonely grandeur. Even if no actual ardent and settled love rankled in her heart there was a strange fascination in Rupert Falconer's romantic looks and mien, his mysterious appearance and chivalrous homage that might easily have deepened into intense passion.

"My poor father, he is the only one who loves me," she thought as she approached their temporary mansion. "When he is gone I can but secure the world's splendour and homage for consolation. And I will; yes, to the very utmost," she muttered, involuntarily, as if to give depth and determination to the resolve.

But the echo of the low-murmured words had not died away when she was suddenly accosted by a servant, who approached her with a hesitating and troubled manner, which at once excited his young mistress's alarm.

"Please, my lady, please to make haste, for my lord is—he is not very well, my lady."

Lady Marian's heart seemed to stop its pulsations and to lie heavy and lead-like in her bosom as she listened.

There was a dreadful presentiment of evil in her mind, which the man's terrified face and hesitating manner too fully confirmed.

"Is he—the earl—dead?" she asked, with a desperate calmness.

"Dead! oh, dear, my lady, Heaven forbid," was the reply, "but still he is very ill, and the doctor is sent for, my lady, and we telegraphed for Mrs. Aston, which Mr. Reynolds thought would be a help and comfort to you, my lady."

Marian waved her hand in silent deprecation. She could bear no more torture, no more suspense. The delay in her return, the occupation with more personal yet stranger interests had left her father and the duties connected with him to menials.

She felt as if she was guilty of a crime.

And yet, poor girl, if there was a faultless part in her conduct and wishes it was her love for and attention to her father since he had been so nearly taken from her.

She hurried on to the house.

There was, to her sickly fancy, an air of terror and desolation about its very outward aspect.

And as she entered the house more than one domestic was waiting, with scared looks and half-concealed figures, in the large hall.

"What is it, Reynolds? where is he?" gasped Lady Marian, addressing the butler, who had been in the household from his childhood.

"My lord has been taken ill, with a kind of faint, or stroke, or something," said the butler, with a pitying and kindly respect in his tone. "When the doctor comes he will tell us; but he does not know any one, so you need not to reveal you were not here, my lady."

"Where?" was all the poor girl could say.

And Reynolds led the way to a sitting-room on the ground floor where the earl still lay.

The first glance somewhat assured her as to the worst alarm.

There was no sign of a distorting attack in the white, calm features of the invalid as he lay on the couch where he had been placed. But the ashen hue, the utter prostration of the attitude spoke but too plainly the severity and perhaps hopelessness of the illness.

Calmly and silently she placed herself at his side, and inquired into the remedies that had been applied, and strove to imagine others, during the weary interval ere the doctor arrived.

Then came the terrible question:

"What is it? is there hope?"

Then the appalling though gently spoken truth:

"It is a sudden prostration, after a temporary revival, and, except by some most unforeseen power, the recovery is more than doubtful."

It were of little avail to dwell on the hours of anxious watching and doubt which succeeded.

That day and the night and the morning hours that succeeded were passed in silent hopelessness by the watchers.

But, as the second day wore on, there seemed a slight revival of strength and consciousness. And Lady Marian fondly hung over the pillow as she saw the lips move and the eyes open in a faint, dim recognition of her who was the chief object of his love and care.

"Dearest papa, you are better, you will live for poor Marian, will you not?" she whispered.

He gave a faint, sad smile.

"No—no—too late—forgive—forgive, my child—my poor—darling—child."

The words were distinctly audible to her, even while so low and languid. But their meaning was still obscure and perplexing. And, had it not been for the engrossing scene of death and farewell that followed, her thoughts might have dwelt more closely on it than for the moment they remained.

Ere many hours, ere the sun again went down on the fair land of France, the stranger on her shores was numbered with the dead.

Now Lady Marian Biddulph, the now, the young, the fair Countess of Marston, was an orphan and alone.

"My dear young lady, be comforted. It was only what could not long be delayed," said the worthy housekeeper, who had hurried to Cannes with a speed of which her years and infirmities scarcely seemed capable. "Every one could see that my poor dear lord had received his death warrant in that sad accident. Thank Heaven you were with him, and that he died in his bed, that's what I say!"

But the allusion only seemed to harrow up the girl's grief.

"Aston, I can trust you; you are too faithful, too good to deceive or betray," she said, in an awestricken tone. "Tell me what could he, my father, mean by his last words—by speaking of forgiveness? What could I have to pardon in him, my indulgent, kindly parent?"

And a fresh burst of tears came from the orphan's eyes.

Mrs. Aston strove to conceal a troubled, anxious expression that came on her marked features.

"Who can guess, my lady? Perhaps he might think that he should have managed better for you in the solitary life which you will have now, my lady. As you say there can be nothing else, or his mind might be wandering, my lady."

Marian did not reply, but the memory of that look and tone was too vivid for her to allow of such a palliation to console her. It was certainly intentional on the earl's part. Would time indeed explain the mystery too fatally?

"And you mean to have my lord taken to the castle of course, my lady?" asked the housekeeper.

"Yes, afterwards," returned the girl. "When I can have all arranged for such a removal, and we can go with him, you know, it shall be done. But first we will have a temporary service here, dear Aston, and let him be laid in the little mausoleum for a brief space. It seems sacrilege to drag him there ere he is well cold," she added, pleadingly.

The housekeeper did not dissent from the young countess's opinion, though she perhaps deemed it a useless prolongation of torture and suspense.

And at the moment they were interrupted by a message brought from Lord Treville of condolence and inquiry.

"Lord Treville wishes to know how the countess Marian bears her affliction, and will be most happy to be of any service in his power to her," was the purport of the communication.

Lady Marian—or as she must now be called Lady Marston—gave a half-impatient shrug of her shoulders.

"Aston! Aston! I hate the very name!" she exclaimed. "Would that I could discard this burden-

some rank—this odious title—and be in the happy privacy of ordinary life!"

Mrs. Aston shook her head.

"You know not, you cannot realize your feelings, and Heaven grant that you never may, my lady," she said. "But my belief is that it's worse to part with rank and wealth than with love, for in one case there is something to make up for it, and in the other one never knows that the love will last. 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,' that's my belief, and I've lived long and seen a great deal in my time, my dear young lady."

The young countess gave a melancholy dissenting shake of the head.

At twenty-two and fifty-eight life and its belongings appear so differently, and Marian panted for the earnest, eager happiness of intense and unchanging love.

CHAPTER LXII.

Attempt the end and never stand to doubt;
Nothing's so hard but search will find it out.

ERNEST BELFORT was free so far as human restraints availed—free in that romantic Boulogne cottage where the girl he loved and to whom he was so deeply indebted had passed her early days—free to remain at pleasure or to risk his safety by an undue outbreak from the shelter that had stood him in such excellent stead. Was it a wonder if after that long time of restraint and surveillance he should pant for liberty, that the very sparkling of the ocean waves, the voices of the mariners, the joyous sportiveness of the few who ventured to plunge in the sea in that chill season seemed like the allurements of the sirens to his imprisoned soul?

"Why should I remain? No one can heed my cravings and griefs," he murmured. "And it is but cowardice to remain like a rat in a hole while the noble girl who has saved me is exposed to all the rough winds and the hardships that this world casts on the helpless and the unfriended! Yes, I will go! I will seek her, the noble and generous one, and ask her to share my fortunes if there is but a chance for me to protect and cherish her as she deserves!"

And Ernest proceeded to carry out this resolve so soon as it was absolutely formed. His first measure was to arrange to the best of his judgment for the safety of the cottage, of which he had been left the chief tenant.

Every weak point of access or receptacle of portable valuables that could be placed in safety was carefully examined by him ere he would finally arrange his plans for his exit from the cottage.

But there was little to need protection, little to tempt any depredators in that modest and lonely dwelling. And Lord Belfort at last gave up the idea of danger to the absentees' property, and proceeded to arrange for the transit of the little that belonged to himself personally in the modest home of Cora's early protectors.

Still a lingering wish remained to possess and to preserve some relic of the former tenant of that modest dwelling—a wish he had never even dared to hint to the sharp and jealous natures of Adèle and her guardian.

"Jeannette, mon enfant, do you know where it was that Mademoiselle Cora used to sleep?" he asked of the young, half-witted peasant who had been left to minister to his simple wants.

"I? ah, yes, I do, monsieur. I was so fond of Miss Cora, and she, poor thing, went away so quickly that she could not say good bye, nor take anything with her. Pauvre mademoiselle!" returned the simple-minded Norman girl, whom Ernest at once exalted into a very paragon of soubrettes.

And she ushered him at once into the small, neat little recess rather than chamber which had been Cora St. Croix's bedroom.

It was a quaint little apartment. A low, shelving ceiling, a wainscoted wall, and a casement window made it at once sombre and confined in a first appearance.

Ernest surveyed it with eager curiosity. Perhaps it reminded him in miniature of the chamber of safety at Biddulph Castle. But scarcely in its means of escape or hiding. That was impossible in so small an area. Yet, in the very waywardness of fancy, he began a survey of the sides of the room. He remembered the skilful fitting of the panelling in that oak chamber.

There had been troublesome times in that seaport town when the cottage was built. Mrs. Falconer had often paused in her stories of the past, in her legends of days gone by, to explain the antiquity of her dwelling. Might it not be that some place of refuge would have been provided in its erection? It was a wayward and useless fancy perhaps, yet it took possession of the young man's mind; and he slowly and carefully passed his hand along every crevice of the wall, to ascertain whether any opening, any roughness betokened some secret spring.

But in vain, as at first appeared. He felt each crevice, each rough aperture, without the slightest suspicion of any such secret repository being afforded. And Ernest, at length, was giving up the search in despair, with a bitter smile of contempt at his own folly, when, as he put his hand to close the casement that he had just opened, there came against his fingers a cold metallic substance, which on minute examination turned out to be a small spring, that he at once attempted to press. It was rusty and hard, however, and it was some time ere he could succeed in making it yield to his touch.

Still, he was strong and determined, and though his fingers were actually wounded and bleeding from the sharp edges of the small bolt, he did not relax his efforts till he had drawn it back and revealed a small kind of cupboard in the wainscot, with one shelf, on which lay what seemed to be a ragged and soft linen bundle.

But his curiosity had been too strongly excited to be easily satisfied, and drawing the bundle from its resting-place, without bestowing one thought on the doubtful act he was committing, he proceeded to unfold it and examine its multifarious contents.

They were certainly of little interest in themselves. The small articles even to his masculine mind had evidently belonged to a young child; a jewelled coral, that had hung round some infant throat, and a faded ribbon sash were all that presented themselves to his view—of little interest one would think to a young man like Ernest Belfort, but in reality they inspired him with eager hope and expectation.

He guessed at once the nature of the deposit thus carefully concealed. He had so often heard Cora St. Croix allude to the sole proof of her identity, should any question arise of the parents who had given her birth. Now he actually looked on them, those infant relics, but to what avail?

"What use can these be?" he muttered. "As if all these masses of lace and cotton in which infants are wrapped were not one and the same. Cora has but little to expect if these are the only clue she can obtain to her name and birth."

He let the little yellow, discoloured frock that had once doubtless been some mother's or nurse's pride fall in disgust from his hands. It touched his foot as it fell, and he fancied that a slight rustling noise met his ear as it slid by his ankle that was scarcely produced by that soft material of which it was composed.

Once more he lifted it, and examined it more closely. And though almost imperceptible, save to a keen eye and delicate hand, he was at last convinced that some extraneous substance was carefully concealed within a broad hem at the bottom of the frock, though so carefully and artfully placed that there was the very slightest possible difference between the sides of the garment in thickness.

Lord Belfort's first impulse was to tear open the garment and ascertain the nature of the enclosure. Would it not be possible that doubt would be thrown on the genuineness of the whole affair should he alone and without witnesses unravel the possible secret?

"It must be traced to the very bottom," he thought. "Yes, dear, noble Cora, you risked your life for me, and I will not shrink from any exposure necessary to revealing your secret. But how, in what manner?" he mused.

He guessed not that the object of his care and affection was in the same land with himself, that she and the other persons who had played so conspicuous a part in the drama of her life were by a succession of coincidences united in one small neighbourhood. But the most feasible idea that did occur to him was an appeal to the brother of Sibbald Carew, on behalf of that brother's protégé.

True, it was a dangerous experiment for one who had been the cause of Sibbald's death. But Ernest Belfort's character was maturing and elevating by adversity. He was at once weary of seclusion and suspense. In truth it had been for the sake of Cora's wishes on his behalf that he had preserved the concealment so long and so patiently; and now he resolved to cast all on one die—to clear his own fame, and to place the noble girl to whom he owed so much in her natural sphere.

And then—what then?

To do Ernest justice he sternly turned from any more distant anticipations for the future. No selfish plans and wishes should be allowed to mingle with the better and nobler aspirations that were struggling for the mastery.

(To be continued.)

ENGLISH AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS IN AMERICA.—An American farmer writes against the importation by Mr. Arch of English labourers, and rather roughly maligns them by stating broadly that all English agricultural labourers are good for nothing, that they

will not do a good day's work, that they will not learn American husbandry, that they are saucy, that they refuse the smallest job not in the letter of their agreement, that they think nothing of flying from a bargain, and that the moment they have learnt their business they look for better wages with another employer.

THE FORESTER'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER XX.

"Come! We are upon this lurking business to serve the desire of our lord, Count Alfrasco," said Borrelli. "He left thee near Pisata, with his command, to play spy on Cosmo. I went with him to Zapponetto. Four days ago he bade me seek thee, and return with thee to Zapponetto, with thy news, if any thou hast. I met thee near the cottage of Cosmo at noon, and thou toldst me that Lord Colonna was at Atrani; that thou hadst seen Cosmo depart at daylight as if to go to that town; and that thou hadst just seen Cosmo's daughter leave the cottage with the vase, and take the way towards this fountain, and so I came with thee, and we hid in yonder hollow—'twas there I hid when our Lord of Zapponetto failed to carry off the maiden—and there concealed we have seen that which hath passed and which will add mightily to thy budget of news for Count Alfrasco. When the fierce old forester trod so near us, ere he ended the wooing of Lord Colonna, I was in a state of terror lest the old fellow might spy us, or even smell us, for there is no bloodhound in all Italy that hath so keen a nose as old Cosmo. And I doubt not that thou wast full of terror also then, Manfredi?"

"Ay, was I. He would have made an end of one or both of us had he seen us."

"And is it because of that terror that thou didst drink dreams of vengeance against Cosmo?"

"Nay, but for the viper's poison that is in my veins, and which hath made my death sure," replied Manfredi, with a howl so keen that Borrelli sprang to his feet and, with an oath, bade him remember where he was and that Cosmo might return.

"Not he, curse him!" replied Manfredi. "He hath, as I told thee, a wife who is very ill, and rarely leaves her bedside. She hath not been here and scarcely out of the cottage since Lord Alfrasco was here."

"But what about that viper's poison thou didst begin to speak of?"

"Dost remember the handkerchief I found in the wood, where the old villain of a forester—"

"Ay—thou didst snatch it from a hanging limb and didst bind it about thy face where Cosmo had wounded thee with the staff."

"Wilt listen? Lurking under the cottage, some two days after that, I heard the maiden talking to Cosmo; he asked her to tell the tale again how she had slain a viper as she went to the fountain, how she cleansed the venom of the reptile from her head-piece with the handkerchief she had; how she tossed it into the bushes; how she slew the viper with the staff and throw the staff away; how with a bodkin she picked out the broken fangs from the golden head-piece that had saved her, and tossed the bodkin away—and much more I heard, which I keep to tell Count Alfrasco," added Manfredi, grinding his teeth with rage and pain.

"I ask not thy gain of eavesdropping," said Borrelli. "But what hath all this to do with 'drinking dreams of vengeance' upon Cosmo and his daughter?"

"The staff with which Cosmo wounded me was that with which Vittoria slew the viper."

"Oh!"

"And the bodkin that I did tread upon to the utter piercing of my foot was that with which she did pick out from her gold band the points of the viper's fangs."

"Aha!"

"And the handkerchief that I found on the bough, and with which I did bind up my hurts was that with which she did wipe off and soak up the splashes of viper's venom from her head-piece, not an hour, not half an hour ere I had it over my fresh wound. Oh! Curse her!"

"Thou thou art poisoned!"

"Ay, even to my marrow!"

"I wonder that thou hast lived till now, Manfredi." "I felt not any of the effects of the venom," replied the miserable man, "until I had overheard Cosmo's daughter telling him of how she had slain the viper. From that instant agony hath been running riot in my veins, in my bones, in my marrow! Look at me! Do I not look like the plague-spotted corpse of a beggar's hovel? Ay, draw away from me, or I may bite thee!"

"Ha!" cried Borrelli, alarmed, and drawing his dagger.

"Fish! and that for thy dagger!" said the

writhing Manfredi, snapping his fingers in rage, pain, and despair. "I would beg thee, Alonzo Borrelli, to stab me to the heart this instant were it not that I hope to live to be avenged upon Cosmo and his dainty daughter!"

"Thou hast ever had much malice in thee, man," said Borrelli, with a wary eye on his companion, as if he feared the poisoned man might grow suddenly rabid and bite him, "yet I see not why thou hast so fierce a desire to destroy the daughter of Cosmo. She did not intend to harm thee; and, as for that, hadst thou been in Cosmo's place wouldst thou not have fought as he did?"

"What! Thou wouldst attempt to persuade me from my desire of revenge!"

"Bah! hate the viper that did fall in the way of the maid—"

"And why not Count Alfrasco?"

"Ho!" was the reply of Borrelli. "And why him?"

"Because had he not conceived a passion for the maid he would not have forced me to aid at the intended abduction, and then I should not have been poisoned."

"But had he not seen the maid Count Alfrasco would not have attempted the abduction."

"True, Borrelli, and the maid would never have existed but for Cosmo, and so I hate him and her. I hate Lord Colonna too, for but for his command not to harm Cosmo as we arrested the man Cosmo would have been cut down ere he had a chance to wound me. Oh, I hate all. But now let me quench my thirst again, and then we will set out for Zapponetto. The scheme of Count Alfrasco is working well."

"And what is that scheme, Manfredi?" asked Borrelli, with more show of eagerness than he intended. To this Manfredi made no reply as he was again swallowing water with the thirst of a starved camel. As the reader has been told, Borrelli was as desirous to serve Sicardo the Brigand as to aid the purposes of Count Alfrasco.

He had expected at the castle of the latter at Zapponetto to hear "the bark of the fox," for he had not for an instant forgotten the whispered warning of the brigand as they parted. But no signal from Sicardo had he received or perceived.

Yet he remembered that he held his life only at the pleasure of the powerful brigand, whose dagger he feared might reach him if he ceased to be of use to him; or, more truly, Borrelli feared not direct assassination at the hands of the agents of the chief so much as a death by fearful and lingering torture if he failed to have it in his power to afford some important information to Sicardo.

He also greatly feared Count Alfrasco, and dared show no reluctance to again visit Del Parso when Lord Alfrasco bade him go seek Manfredi.

He had less fear of meeting Sicardo in Del Parso after he had heard that the brigand's fortress at Forza had been captured by a band of Greek pirates, who had carried away to Greece Sicardo's infant son, and that Sicardo had gone in pursuit of the kidnappers.

Yet so great was the fear of Sicardo in Borrelli's heart that he ceased not to act as a spy upon the designs of Count Alfrasco; nor could he cease to fear Sicardo's future movements so long as he was not sure that the great brigand was not dead. In no better way could he gain a claim upon the gratitude of Sicardo than by felling all schemes which any one might be plotting for the injury of Cosmo and Vittoria, for he knew that the former was the father and the latter the sister of Sicardo.

Hence his eagerness to discover the designs of Count Alfrasco, those of which he had just heard Manfredi speak.

"Now then," he said, coaxingly, as Manfredi finished his quaffing, "what is the plan of the noble count?"

"He has not told me," replied Manfredi, with a glance of suspicion at his companion.

"But thou knowest the plan?"

"I have imagined it. Did not the count say, in thy presence, that I had more sense in my little finger than thou hadst in thy whole body?"

"So he did, and thou hast."

"Therefore will I not tell to thee my thoughts. Now let us begone, for it will be far into the night ere we can walk to where thou hast the horses. Ha! this pain in my veins!" groaned Manfredi. "May I live to see him on the scaffold!"

"Who? Cosmo?"

"Ay, and his daughter, and his wife, and his son, and Colonna di Caraccioli!"

"Ho! Lord Colonna!"

"I meant not that—the name of the noble prince slipped from me! Pester not me with thy knavish questions, Borrelli! The venom in my veins drives me to say mad things."

"There is a leech at Zapponetto, a learned Greek, who may be able to drive the viper's venom from thy blood."

"Nay, I am a doomed man. I have felt that as I crouched and crawled amid these woods, and lurked near the cottage of Cosmo. But I have learned enough now to avenge me. Nay, so I may live long enough to see—well, I say no more."

"The Greek may heal thee."

"Why, what great cure hath he done at Zapponetto?"

"He hath given Count Alfrasco a pair of new ears."

"Thou art romancing."

"Nay. When thou seest Count Alfrasco thou wilt say—I have dreamed that Sicardo cut off the ears of my lord."

"Bah! I saw the combat, and I saw an old brigand roll up the severed ears in a piece of Lord Zerzo's silk scarf; and I doubt not Sicardo will try to nail those ears to the great banner staff of the Largo del Mercato in Naples."

"If he lives, he will try to do it. If he try to do it, it will be done."

"Then what nonsense is this?"

"Nay, the count has a pair of new ears—ears of flesh and blood."

At this assertion Manfredi, despite his incessant inward pain, laughed aloud in scorn.

"Oh, thou wilt live some time yet, since thou canst laugh," said Borrelli. "Now hark ye. Castano, the Greek leech from Constantinople, who for a year hath lived on the bounty of our lord at Zapponetto, did make fresh with his knife the ear wounds of our lord and instantly fix thereon two human ears the same instant severed from the head of one who did right willingly offer such service of ears to Count Alfrasco. And these ears did not wither, but by the art of the Greek were made to unite with where the ears of the count had been; and when I left Zapponetto the count had no sign that he had lost his own ears and was wearing the ears of another, save the scarcely perceptible scars where they had united with his own flesh."

Manfredi stared in wonder at his companion for a moment, and then exclaimed: "It cannot be true!" "I will agree to give thee twenty ducats, if thou wilt promise me as many, if all is not true," replied Borrelli.

"And who right willingly offered his ears to our lord?"

"See—mine are gone," said Borrelli, lifting his long, thick and shaggy locks from his temples. He was earless.

"Out upon thee!" cried Manfredi, scornfully.

"Does not all Naples know that thy ears were cut off by Black Sforza to punish thee for stealing a silver chalice from a church? And even hadst thou had thy lost ears to offer to our lord, dost think he would have worn ears of which Black Sforza said: 'Behold ears more like the ears of a donkey than the ears of a man!'"

"Some day I may see the ears of Black Sforza cut off," growled Borrelli. "I heard Sicardo say he had the deed in mind."

"But meanwhile tell me who gave his ears to our lord's service?"

"All who do serve Alfrasco of Zapponetto may answer 'I' to that," laughed Borrelli, "since we often risk our necks in his service. Ho! thou didst have an ear slashed for him the other day!"

"Ay, by the javelin of Lord Colonna. I have not forgotten it," replied Manfredi, with a scowl. "But answer my question."

"Why, when the Greek Castano did tell our lord, who had an idea that the thing might be done—that it could be done, our lord asked the Greek to sell him his own ears."

"Ho! and the Greek did?"

"Nay—for the Greek had none."

"St. Peter!"

"He had lost them at Constantinople, and nearly lost his head at the same time. He hides the loss with a cap, a Greek turban, and his hair."

"Well?"

"Now I would have sold my ears—had I had any—for half the sum the count offered to old Madjara, the steward of the castle," continued Borrelli.

"Ah, then our lord now wears the ears that have so often listened at keyholes—"

"Nay, old Madjara's ears were too valuable to his wife, who uses them as handles when she beats him with her slippers. And the Greek said Madjara's ears were too old. The ears of a young, healthy and vigorous person were vitally necessary. Then came forward one who said: 'Take my ears, and my heart if need be, for service of my lord.'"

"Oh! Pray tell me the name of that idiot," cried Manfredi.

"Ergivotta di Vampa—or, as she is sometimes called, Galpa the Page."

"Ah! I had forgotten her and her devotion to our lord!" said Manfredi, in great wonder. "Poor lady!"

"Happy lady!" said Borrelli, with a bitter smile, "since our lord doth seem to love her now more than ever, and doth speak of making the fond creature his lawful wife. His ears thou knowest were small for a man of his stature, and hers large for a woman. Well, our lord wears the ears of Ergivetta di Vampa now, and only close scrutiny can detect that they were not born with him. Oh, he is a noble lord, is he not, to accept such a gift from the lady! What princely condescension in a Caraccioli! I mean that so old Cosmo would phrase it."

"And why should she or any one not esteem as a great honour our lord's acceptance of such a service?" asked Manfredi, with a covert glance at his companion, who was injudiciously garrulous.

"Oh, of course—but still, I, not being a noble, and only a fellow of no repute, would go without my ears all my life rather than deprive my lady-love of even the tip of hers—ha! why dost eye me in that fox-like manner?"

"Nay—go on."

"That thou mayest report my speech to our lord! Thou art a cunning knave, Manfredi, but I stand well in the favour of our lord, and thou canst not set him against me, envious as thou art. Still, I will say no more. Come, let us be gone. But speak not of what I have said."

So saying Borrelli stalked away, followed by Manfredi, whose strength had greatly revived since he had twice quenched his thirst.

"Thou needst say no more," mused Manfredi, as he followed the other through the forest, on their way to where Borrelli had horses to bear them to Zapponezzo. "Thou hast said enough. I read traitor to our lord in thy eye; and if my lord's plan be betrayed, or be known too soon, it may never come to a head; and if it never come to a head, I shall not be avenged at one grand swoop, by means of our lord, upon Cosmo, Vittoria, Sicardo, Lord Colonna and our lord—for I do hate them all. Cosmo wounded me in my face; his daughter poisoned the rag that did poison me, the prince split my ear, and afterward struck me down with the staff—and I hate his reputed goodness; Sicardo slew my brother when the brigand rescued his betrothed from those who were carrying her off; and Count Alfrasco hath ground me to the dust with a thousand insults. Ah, his plot is a good one to gratify his hate of those I hate, and to destroy himself; for, if it succeed, then will Sicardo slay him, though the life of the brigand pay forfeit the next instant."

Five days after this Manfredi was closeted with Count Alfrasco at Castle Zapponezzo.

Borrelli had accompanied Manfredi to the presence of the count; but the latter, wishing to be alone with Manfredi, bade Borrelli retire.

The count, unaware that Manfredi's veins were tainted with viper's venom, stared in amazement at his changed appearance. Manfredi, remembering the combat before the fountain of St. Anthony, gazed curiously at the count.

Borrelli had not spoken falsely. The count had ears—perfect ears. Manfredi, however, who was a man of memory and observation, noticed one new thing in regard to the ears—the count wore jewels in them. It was not uncommon among effeminate male Italians to copy a custom of their females and sport earrings, but never before had Manfredi seen earrings in the ears of Count Alfrasco.

"They are indeed the ears of Signorina Ergivetta," thought Manfredi; "at least, they were, and as it would have been impossible to conceal the fact that they have been pierced and used to wearing weighty earrings, the count must per necessity wear such baubles."

"So thy eyes are fixed on my ears, Manfredi?"

"Ay, my lord."

"They were not smitten off by the brigand."

"Of course not, my lord."

"And he who dares say the ears of Alfrasco of Zapponezzo were lost in combat with Sicardo the Brigand is a vile calumniator."

"Most base and vile, my lord."

"And if the brigand or any one else doth succeed in nailing a pair of ears to the great banner-staff in the Largo del Mercato, and it be declared that the said ears were the ears of Alfrasco of Zapponezzo, the assertion will be false."

"Of course, my lord; and all will know it to be false, for behold I my lord still has ears! and ears of man are not like the claws of a crab, to grow again after being lost," replied Manfredi, bowing.

"It need not be denied that the rascally brigand made the attempt, as these scars may prove," said the count, touching his ears; "but he failed."

"Most assuredly he failed. The man hath not been born that can cut off the ears of my lord."

"And that all may cast their eyes upon my ears, and at the same time see that they are not false ones, I wear in my ears these weighty baubles of gold and diamonds."

"A most cunning and wise device, my lord."

"And now, as this is all understood, Manfredi, tell me what hath chanced to thee since I saw thee! Thou art as lean and cadaverous as the corpse of a starved beggar; and had not Borrelli said, 'Here is Manfredi, my lord,' I should not have recognized thee. A life in the forest of Del Parso doth not fatten thee."

Manfredi then informed the count of how the poison of a viper had gotten into his veins, and how he had discovered the fact by overhearing a conversation between Cosmo and Vittoria.

"Then thou art a doomed man, Manfredi," said the count, when he had heard of this matter.

"I hope to live and see the end of Leonato di Chiaramonti, my lord," replied Manfredi, with a writhe of pain and a muttered malediction.

"The venom hath mounted to thy brain, man," said the count, staring at the tortured victim. "Leonato di Chiaramonti, Prince del Arnato, is dead, I know not how many years."

"My lord, hast never heard a rumour that Sicardo the Brigand is a son of Duke Leonato?"

"I have heard it, and placed no faith in it; and, from what we learned at the fountain, we now know that Sicardo is the son of Cosmo, the Forester of Del Parso."

"True, my lord; and Cosmo the Forester is Leonato di Chiaramonti, of Sicily."

"It cannot be," exclaimed the count, his eyes dilating with surprise and delight.

If the assertion of his servant was true, the count would be in possession of a secret which he could use against the queen, whom he secretly hated because of her fondness for his half-brother.

"My lord," continued Manfredi, "as is well known in all Italy, Duke Leonato, and thy noble father, the Grand Constable, were in their youths rivals in arms and in love, and also in manly beauty and all manly and warlike excellences."

"I have heard something of this, but go on."

"During the reign of Ladislaus, late King of Naples, and late brother of King Joanna, Duke Leonato and his bride were at the royal court in Naples. The bride of the duke was a daughter of Queen Eleanor of Aragon and John I., King of Castile—a lady of great beauty and nobleness. Her name was Maria Christina, and she had rejected the hand of Prince del Alberti of Rome. During the bridal visit at Naples the duke in handling an arquebuse shot Prince del Alberti. The prince died. When he was shot no one was present except Leonato. The report got abroad that the duke had purposely slain the prince, because the latter had loved the wife of the duke. It was known that the prince lived several days after he was shot, and the surgeon of Gianni Caraccioli attended him in the palace of his father, and thy father asserted that the prince, with his dying breath, declared that Duke Leonato had deliberately assassinated him. Indeed, a paper, signed by the prince, to that effect was shown to the court by Gianni di Caraccioli. An attempt to arrest the duke was made, but he escaped to his native Sicily, his wife having warned him that Gianni di Caraccioli had privately threatened to destroy the duke if she, the duchess, refused any longer to receive Ser Gianni as her lover."

"My excellent father was never a saint," said the count, with a laugh. "He was a man to quickly avail himself of a chance to be rid of two rivals—the duke, who was the husband, and Del Alberti, who stood higher in the esteem of the duchess than Gianni di Caraccioli. Did he obtain the desired prize?"

"Nay, my lord, for the duchess escaped from Naples with her husband."

"At least my father had revenge," laughed the wicked count. "The reputation of the duke was destroyed, and Del Alberti was slain. Proceed."

"But the vengeance of Gianni di Caraccioli did not end speedily," resumed Manfredi. "His hate for the duke, who soon afterward received the title of prince in Sicily, increased, and his love for Maria Christina became hatred and desire for her ruin. Del Alberti was a near relative of powerful officers of the Papal court, and by working upon their family pride, and by continued exertions, extending through several years, Duke Leonato was at last placed under the awful ban of the Church."

"Ay, the desire of a Caraccioli for vengeance upon an enemy is sleepless as the fires of Vesuvius," remarked the count, twisting the ends of his moustache, and proud of his Caraccioli blood.

"Thy father's hatred for the duke had meanwhile been at work in Sicily, and by his means the mind of the late King of Sicily and Aragon, Ferdinand the Just—the father of the present king, Alfonso V. the Magnanimous—was bitterly inflamed against the duke, his sister's husband, and Ferdinand was led at last to believe that the duke and the duchess were conspiring to slay him, or at least to wrest the throne from him."

"Ay, I have heard that Duke Leonato aimed to be king of Sicily and Naples."

"Yes, my lord; and so sentence of death was decreed by Ferdinand upon Duke Leonato and his wife, the Duchess Maria Christina. But they escaped just as they were about to be arrested."

"And perished at sea," interrupted the count.

"So all the world believes, my lord. But they still live, as I will prove to thee presently. The wife of Cosmo the Forester, now called, in Del Parso, Donna Castelletta—"

"Ay—I saw her that day at the fountain."

"She hath been very ill and delirious since that day, my lord, and I, concealed beneath the floor of the cottage of Cosmo, have gathered enough from her ravings and sometimes lucid conversations with Cosmo, to be perfectly assured that Cosmo is the outlawed and supposed dead Duke Leonato, and to know that Donna Castelletta is the outlawed and supposed dead Duchess Maria Christina."

"Ha!" exclaimed the count.

"My lord will remember that Cosmo said he had a firm plea whereby he was entitled by the ancient law of Del Parso to claim thy head, and that he suddenly declined to advance that plea, his wife having said something to him which we did not hear?"

"I remember it well, and hence I suspected that he was indeed of noble birth, and so I told Lord Colonna for reasons of my own. But I had no suspicion that Cosmo was Duke Leonato di Chiaramonti."

"He is; and he made not the plea; and only because he knew that in doing so he would place his neck and that of his wife under the axe of Black Sforza."

"And under that axe will I place their necks, and the neck of another, ere I be a month older."

"The other is Lord Colonna," thought Manfredi.

But, knowing well the enmity of the vindictive count toward all who showed too much penetration of his secret schemes, Manfredi was careful not to utter the foregoing thought aloud.

He, as wily as the count, was to appear only as a blind and obedient agent in that somewhat complicated scheme of quadruple vengeance which he suspected was seething in the brain and heart of Alfrasco of Zapponezzo.

He replied quickly:

"Ay, the neck of Sicardo the Brigand must go with that of the others, my lord."

"That of course," thought the count, "after he shall have writhed a year under the torturing hands of Black Sforza. But the neck I meant now carries the head of my very beloved brother—Colonna the Just!"

Manfredi read this unuttered thought as clearly as if the count had spoken it.

He continued:

"From my covert beneath the floor of Cosmo's cottage I also gathered these facts: Sicardo the Brigand is indeed the son of Duke Leonato—that son once known in Sicily as Tancred di Chiaramonti, Count of Esse, and who was supposed to have perished at sea at the time his parents were believed to have perished. For some years after their escape they dwelt in disguise and under an assumed name in Spain. But at length Count Tancred, our brigand, burning to avenge the real and supposed injuries of his parents, appeared in Sicily and in Italy under the name of Rizzio di Sicardo, as a leader of brigands; though I have often heard in Naples that he is less a brigand than a man who bitterly hates the Caracciolis, and all those nobles who in any manner abetted thy father in the enmity of the latter toward Duke Leonato—whether in Naples or in Sicily—"

"He is a brigand!" exclaimed the count, sharply. "Neither more nor less! A vile thief and robber, were he ten times a Chiaramonti, and Black Sforza shall exhaust all the contrivances and inventions of the torture chamber upon him! Proceed."

"Before Count Tancred—"

"Call him Sicardo the Brigand," roared the count, raising a heavy lump of bronze threateningly, and glaring at Manfredi.

"Thy noble father doth suspect him to be the supposed dead son of Leonato, my lord," said Manfredi, humbly.

"No matter! I know him only as Sicardo the Brigand."

"Ay—as the man who cut off thy ears!" thought Manfredi, who resumed:

"Sicardo the Brigand, ere he parted from Duke Leonato—"

"Call him Cosmo!"

"Yes, my lord—ere he parted from Cosmo, Sicardo swore a solemn oath never to reveal to any one that he was a Chiaramonti so long as the ban of the Church and the sentence of outlawry should be over his parents. So they parted. After a time Cosmo, suspecting that his identity was in danger of being discovered in Spain, dared secretly visit Queen Joanna of Naples."

"Ha! the queen?"
And having uttered this involuntary ejaculation Lord Alfrasco fell into a deep meditation which interrupted momentarily the recital of Manfred.
(To be continued.)

A LABOUR OF LOVE.

CHAPTER XI.

A HANSOM is dashing through the streets at eleven o'clock at night.

It draws up before a tall tenement house. An elderly gentleman alights and carefully assists a lady, deeply muffled and veiled, to the ground.

The gentleman knocks loudly on the door. It is late, and working people are weary and sleep very soundly.

Anon the bolts are withdrawn, the door is opened, and a face looks out, illumined by a tallow candle.

"Mr. Fairfax?" says the elderly gentleman, experimentally.

"Fairfax?" says he of the stranger face. "Nobody called Fairfax here."

"Oh, please!" gasps the lady, coming into view. "Where have they gone? They lived here last June—Mr. Fairfax and Mrs. Vail."

"Dunno," says the man, yawning fearfully. "Ask the landlord, fust floor."

Down they go to the door of Mr. Lucas Imri's single room, where he lives the life of a rat, except when he is laying his hands in the coffers of gold he has hidden there.

Repeated knocking calls forth an apparition with a hooked nose, a beard to the girdle, and a red night-cap towering high.

"Where have Mr. Fairfax and Mrs. Vail removed to?" inquires the gentleman.

Mr. Imri, only illumined by the street-lamp which shines across his door (candles are too dear for his use), shakes his filthy, picturesque head mournfully.

"Ah, I know not where those afflicted souls have taken refuge," says he, with touching pity. (Jennie Vail could have enlightened the gentleman as to its sincerity, from old experience of the Jew's gripping proclivities.) "They were a worthy pair, but Heaven sent them many calamities. The grand-daughter went out one day a pleasuring, and never came back—killed, sir, on the railway. When they heard of it the aged man was struck with paralysis on the instant, and the smitten widow—Good sir, the lady is ill, is she not?"

"No," gasps the lady, hastily, sitting down on the stone stair opposite the door. "Go on."

"The widow," resumes Mr. Imri, after wiping an imaginary tear from his almond eye, "being left in one hour, as it were, fatherless and childless, and having not the wherewithal to subsist on, accepted public charity for her aged father, placed him in some hospital, and went away to be near him. Whether the poor paralytic is dead or recovered I know not. They went away, leaving no trace behind. The very dog, long beloved by the mother and child, was sold in their extremity."

The gentleman turns hastily from the old man's sorrowful tale, for the lady has fallen back on the cold, hard stairs, as if dead.

And he carries her tenderly, tenderly out in his arms, poor Jennie Vail!

And so farewell to the old home!

"What can I do for you?" asks Mr. Gardiner, starting up from his cheerless cup of coffee, in the cavernous, echoing coffee-room of the "Castle and Falcon," as Jane creeps in, waa as the morn that is now breaking.

"Find them!" wails she—"find my darlings!"

"And what will you do?"

Her eyes flash, her form dilates; she turns on him sternly firm.

"I will go back to Childerwich."

The rector draws a long sigh.

"Thank Heaven!" he mutters, but she does not hear him, "my chain is broken!"

Lady Thorncliff awoke from her stupor one day delirious.

The experienced nurse who had attended her ever since her accident sought Sir Marcus in great disquietude.

"She has a fancy that Mrs. Thorncliff's life is in danger. I can't quiet her," said the nurse.

Sir Marcus went for Marian.

Mrs. Thorncliff was sleeping late that morning; Flora, peculiarly red-eyed, hung near the door with her bonnet and shawl on.

"Why isn't your mistress in Lady Thorncliff's room yet?" growled the baronet.

"She—she isn't well!" stammered the waiting-

maid, who, with all the domestic force at Childerwich, stood in mortal dread of Sir Marcus.

"Not well! not well! What's the matter with her? and what's the matter with you that you're crying like a baby?" blustered Sir Marcus.

Flora nearly fainted.

"Nothing, sir, is the matter with me," said she, with a desperate attempt at surprise. "But my good, kind mistress frightens me entirely; she'll neither eat nor speak."

Sir Marcus went to Jane's door.

A voice inside said:

"Flora, open the door!"

Flora took the key from her pocket and unlocked the door, the baronet glowering over his nose at the proceedings.

Jane appeared at the aperture, shockingly white and heavy-eyed and evidently just risen from her bed.

"Are you ill?" queried Sir Marcus, hushing his tones to a mild growl.

"I had no sleep last night, that's all," said Jane.

"And why didn't you sleep?"

"I couldn't."

"Humph! none of your business, say you. I say, why d'you keep your door locked?"

"I feel more comfortable with it locked."

"What are we a set of pirates here?"

"Flora, come in and dress me."

"Humph! off at a tangent. Lady Thorncliff's in a high fever. The nurse can't quiet her—perhaps you can."

"I'm coming, Sir Marcus! Haste, Flora! I will not be long."

"All right; don't break your neck though."

And off the baronet stamped.

"Flora, why are you crying?" asked Jane, anxiously, when she noticed her eyes.

"Oh, ma'am, me heart's broke entirely! I'm ordered to leave your service!" sobbed the girl.

"By whom?" cried Jane.

"By Miss Ingrave. Ah! but she has a black heart toward you, my sweet lady! She saw you coming in from the little side gate in the dawn this morning—mustn't she have sharp eyes and pricked-up ears, too? and she got at me to say where you had been, and because I wouldn't nor couldn't say it's dismissed I am; and if I complain a word to the master he is to hear the whole of it."

Jane was in too deep affliction to quiver much under this pin's prick, but she felt it.

"My poor Flora!" said she, sadly, "your faithfulness to me has cost you your place. I dare not gain-say Miss Ingrave. How I am to get on without you Heaven knows. I have few friends, but I believe you are one of them."

"Indeed and you may say that, ma'am!" sobbed Flora; "and it's the sweet lady you always was to me. But since I goes, and Miss Annabel puts Fanny's sister Susan in my place, which maybe she is a spy and a gossip just like Fan—the reason why she's set in my shoes—good bye, my poor, sweet, dear mistress."

And Flora was gone.

Jane resumed her place by my lady's couch, and days came and went, marked by some small yet significant events.

One morning it was related by one of the doctors that the Reverend Octavius Gardiner, Rector of Little Catesby, had resigned the living.

The chain that he had spoken of which had bound him for seventeen years was broken at last. Free of Baron Adderley's benefaction, he was free to befriend Jane Vail.

Once and again my lord, meeting Jane Vail in the hall or walking in the garden, accompanied her with a quiet, dogged persistence, and talked to her with such a peculiar manner that it would have puzzled her completely had she not had the felicity of over-hearing his opinion of her.

At such times Miss Annabel was sure to come down upon the ill-assorted pair, and with the sweetest blandness of speech and an air of fury in her eye ingeniously put an end to the tête-à-tête.

Through all the phases of the fever Lady Thorncliff liked to have Jane Vail beside her.

Did she rave, as she too often did, of the white flame leaping towards her, flashing into her eyes, shooting high above her head, and wrapping her round in its mad embrace, and shriek for help, the soft voice of Jane Vail fell on her ear like a voice from Heaven and stilled her in a moment.

Other voices she never heeded; she hushed her breath to listen to Jane's.

Did she wail and weep under the cruel agony of the daily dressing of her wounds, Jane's head upon the pillow beside hers, Jane's cheek pressed to hers, Jane's loving eyes looking into hers would hush her wailing and charm her pain away so that she would smile softly as at some lovely dream of bygone bliss.

Other faces she could not see; she sought out Jane's as if it had been a star.

Observing these signs, Sir Hastings Vavasour said to Jane in Miss Ingrave's presence:

"When the fever leaves the patient in that first moment of consciousness let yours be the face her eyes first rest on; let yours be the voice that welcomes her to life. A shock of disappointment and she sinks from that moment; a start of pleasure and her life is saved. I may almost say that upon your presence hangs Lady Thorncliff's only chance for recovery."

Mrs. Garnet, the nurse, and Miss Ingrave were both present when this was said.

Involuntarily Jane cast a keen look at Miss Ingrave. Knowing that with Lady Thorncliff's recovery came Annabel's downfall, she looked with considerable anxiety for some hint as to which course that lady's thoughts took.

Annabel's large, innocent-seeming eyes were fixed on vacancy; only a suspicious observer, like Jane, could have detected the quivering of the fine muscles round the mouth and the beat in the hollow of the milk-white throat which witnessed to the profound interest which she was taking in this intelligence.

Sir Hastings was leaving the room before she found breath to ask when that important moment might be expected.

"It may come in forty-eight hours—it will be preceded by a deep, calm slumber."

With this the doctor left, Mrs. Garnet following him out to ask some professional question.

Miss Ingrave darted a singular glance at Jane, who was narrowly scrutinizing her still. Dread, fury, revenge, all struggled to express themselves in that swift glance. Then she cast down her eyes and appeared to ponder anxiously. Then she started up and approached Jane.

"You know what I think of you," she said, in Jane's ear. "You never saw Colonel Thorncliff in your life before you happened to be travelling in the same train by which he came to his end. You stole his papers and came here as his widow. You are Jane Vail in disguise; you are an impostor. A whisper from the right quarter can expose you. Fly! fly! while you have time!"

"Miss Ingrave," answered Jane, with cold disdain, "you know what I think of you. You are not Anthony's daughter; you were placed in her place seventeen years ago to prevent Lady Thorncliff from searching for the true child; you attempted my life on the night of the no-called accident, and again by poison. You are an impostor and a would-be murderer. Whenever Lady Thorncliff is restored to consciousness you will be exposed. Why, then, not take the advice you are pleased to offer me, and fly while you have time?"

Miss Ingrave drew off with a glare of rage.

"Very good!" said she, fiercely, "we shall see. In forty-eight hours much may happen. Please yourself; but meantime remember that the world is turning round, my dear, the world is turning round!"

The nurse re-entering put a step to this colloquy. Well, the two days wore out and sure enough my lady fell into a quiet, sound sleep.

Then the nurse rose in her night and put both the young ladies out (they had each resolved to die rather than desert the post).

Sir Hastings had vowed that not a soul was to stay in the room but the nurse. There would be inevitable rustling of muslin gowns, sighing of weary people, smothering of spasmodic coughs. The patient would be disturbed, would relapse—would never sleep out of a coffin again.

The nurse's last words to Jane were.

"She's safe till twelve o'clock, noon. At the first stir I'll call you."

Her last words to Annabel were

"The first minute she's fit for it you shall have your turn, miss."

Jane went up to her room, and feeling exhausted for want of sleep lay down on her bed.

Miss Ingrave went downstairs to Lord Adderley, whose diurnal visit had occurred even earlier than this morning.

And Jane dreamed; and, oh, it was a sweet dream to break in on all her trouble—it was like fairy music heard in pain!

She thought that she had gone home again to look for her darlings; that she opened the door without knocking; that looking in she saw them both; he bending over his vases and colours and glittering packets of gold dust—she twining the roses, and silver wheat, and lily-buds; and they looked up at her and smiled just as of old—just as of old! And suddenly big Snath jumped up from his mat with a great bark, and leaped upon her, and licked her face, and so she awoke sobbing, with tear-wet eyelids.

It was so dark that at first she thought night had come, and sprang from her bed with her heart in her mouth, thinking that the fateful moment of my lady's awakening had long passed by; but anon she found that it was but eleven o'clock of the morn-

ing yet, and that the sky was black with thunder clouds.

"There must have been a clap of thunder and I thought it was Snath's bark," mused Jane.

She rang for her new maid Susan, so evidently a creature of Miss Ingrave's that she was always aware of her and never gave her anything to report.

She made her dress her prettily, and arrange her hair gracefully.

"My lady will know me when she wakes, I would like to look my best," said Jane.

When she had her crisp, white morning robe on, bound about the slight waist with a black cord, and her soft hair wreathed above her clever brow, and her wounded hand supported by a white silk scarf passed round her neck, she made a very ladylike and interesting appearance.

She went down to the parlour opposite my lady's door, to wait there within sight for the nurse's summons.

It was but a few minutes afterwards that a servant came with a message from Sir Marcus.

Would she step downstairs and look at some hounds he was buying?

Reluctantly enough Jane went downstairs, intending to excuse herself to Sir Marcus and hasten back again.

The front door was wide open; a group stood round it, and a dog-cart was drawn up before it. Sir Marcus was there rubbing his hands and growling away in a cheerful double G. Lord Adderley was there, lounging against the heavy house-wall, with his red-tipped fingers at his craving lips. Miss Ingrave was there in her delicate pale gray robes, with flame-hued ribbons in her golden hair, sitting prettily on one of the time-worn dragons couchant which flanked the portal. And a little man stood by the dog-cart—a little man in a tight blue sporting jacket, with apoplectic neck, bullet-head and bulging eyes, lunging out dog after dog from the repository at his elbow.

"Jove! there's breed!" exclaimed the baronet. "Come out, you beauties; show yourselves. Splendid pups, all ready for their maiden chase, eh, Horseley? But show us the surly old brute I heard barking. A deer hound, eh? What are you staring at, man? Oh—oh—come along, my dear. By George! man, you look as if you never saw a lady before."

"Horseley, did you ever see this lady before?" interposed the melodious voice of Lord Adderley.

Ah! Pale as death, Jane Vail looked at Mr. Horseley; breathless to suffocation Mr. Horseley looked at her. He had a dog hanging meekly by the ear waiting its turn to be dropped on the ground beside a pair that were already slinking about side by side with their noses on the gravel. He forgot to drop the dog; he omitted to answer my lord; the beads of perspiration started out upon his forehead; his eyes seemed ready to start from their sockets; in fact, the whole of Mr. Horseley's faculties were absorbed in the effort of gazing.

My lord grew closer to Jane Vail, a tigerish glare in the pale green orbs; his fingers at his lips as if he were about to eat some delicious morsel.

Miss Ingrave's creamy cheeks glowed as if a red-hot palm had been laid on each.

Sir Marcus woke up.

"The deuce!" roared he. "Is this another of your tricks to annoy my daughter-in-law? What d'ye mean, Horseley, by staring at Mrs. Thorncliff that way? What d'ye mean, I say?"

"Speak out, my good fellow," said Lord Adderley, encouragingly.

The dog-fancier at last drew breath and wiped his forehead.

"Sir Marcus," said he, in fear and trembling, but not of the baronet, "if you will please to forgive the imprudence I will say what I meant by starin' at this good lady as if I were a goin' out of my mind. I could have taken oath in any court in the country, if you hadn't said she was your daughter-in-law; that she was a person as was killed more'n three months ago on the railway, or her very image. The more I looks the more I'm sure on't."

And he rubbed his eyes so as to see her better.

"Well, what has that to do with Mrs. Thorncliff?" said Sir Marcus, in his most turbulent tones; "she wasn't killed, so you don't see a ghost, so there's an end of it."

"Ah, but what was that person's name whom you saw more than three months ago?" softly queried my lord.

Mr. Horseley retreated into the recesses of his dog-cart.

"I can't trust my senses," muttered he, looking back, deprecatingly; "the gal I saw wore a lilac cotton and a white hat, and owned." Here he stopped to fumble at some fastenings inside, and a rattle of a chain was heard. "I bought that there dog afterwards from the gal's mother," continued Mr. Horse-

ley. "I fetched him along to-day for to give you a look at him, Sir Marcus. Dogs has more sagacity sometimes than men. Come out, Snath!"

He dragged a great, growling dog out of the box and plumped it on the ground free.

Ah! That fatal chain of circumstance wanted but a link or two to be long enough to strangle Jane Vail's plot.

Link the first was forged when Snath stole after her the morning she left her home.

Link the second when Colonel Thorncliff put his wife's wedding ring upon her finger.

Link the third when in the summer house she discovered the ring to be a magic key to open the gates of Childerewitch.

Link the fourth—alas! here comes Snath bounding to her feet with one big bark of joy, crouching, quivering, curling round her; his beaming eyes and his licking tongue and his suppliant, fawning body saying as plainly as a dog can speak:

"Oh, Jennie, Jennie, I've found you again!"

Link the fourth was thus completed.

"She is—she is Jane Vail!" screamed Miss Ingrave, springing wildly to her feet. "Look at Jane Vail's dog! Look at that man! Look at herself—at herself, Sir Marcus, swooning with fear! Send her away, Sir Marcus—a vile adventuress! Send her away!"

"Sir Marcus," said Lord Adderley, with his usual drawl, but never lifting his devouring eyes off Jane, "Miss Ingrave took the liberty of advertising for any friends of Jane Vail to communicate with her. This man answered the advertisement, supposing her dead. You see the result. What do you think? Is she your daughter-in-law, or was she ever married to Colonel Thorncliff at all? Is she not evidently a base impostor, who has stolen into your family upon false pretences?"

Sir Marcus now had his turn. He had been so stupefied hitherto that not a word rose to his tongue.

Now he turned on Jane with an ominous darkening of the face.

"Marian, have you nothing to say for yourself?" demanded he.

Nothing. Convicted.

"Come, speak out, girl. Are you what they say?" and he laid a hand heavily on her shoulder.

Not a word. All was over for Jane Vail.

"Have you been deceiving me all this time, passing yourself off as my son's widow—"

"Widow!" echoed Mr. Horseley, with a sudden, indecorous bark of a laugh.

"While you were in reality only the child of a common sailor—Jove! didn't she tell me so herself, the jade?—who got his deserts many a year ago? Tell me that, my girl!"

And the baronet's grip tightened.

She lifted her drooping head, and looked upon them one by one.

On Lord Adderley, slightly flushed for once in his life, and with a curious quivering about the nostrils; on Annabel, transfigured by a blaze of cruel exultation; on the dog-fancier, bloated with suppressed laughter as at a joke; and, last, on Sir Marcus, lowering angrily on her, and ripe for a wild explosion.

No mercy anywhere.

Should she appeal to Sir Marcus by telling him her father's wrongs? No. That ancient jealousy of which my lady had warned her stood between Anthony Adderley's daughter and aid from Sir Marcus.

Identification simply meant destruction.

No mercy, no help anywhere!

A wild thought, born of dire necessity, came into her brain.

Defiance!

One hour longer in Childerewitch, and Lady Thorncliff might be able to say enough to Sir Marcus to save her.

Defiance till my lady awakes!

An electric thrill ran through her—ran through them all—as suddenly her form expanded, her eyes caught fire, and, with a royal gesture of scorn, she said:

"Miserable plotters! Has not every one a counter-part in some corner of the world? May I not be Jane Vail's counterpart? I defy you all! Prove that I am not Colonel Thorncliff's wife if you can!"

A universal gasp testified to the telling effect of this speech.

The plotters glanced in alarm at each other.

Mr. Horseley appeared to be on the verge of apoplexy from suppressed emotions.

Sir Marcus's black brow cleared by a hair's breadth.

"It is not you we require to satisfy with our proofs, madam," said my lord, his green pupils dilating and flaring like the eyes of a panther about to spring.

"What does Sir Marcus think?"

"And a dog would never mistake Jane Vail's counterpart for herself," added Annabel, with fearful zest.

Jane burst out laughing recklessly.

"Sir Marcus!" she cried, looking up in his face with her most effective expression, and nestling near him in her most confiding manner, "this pair ought to be detectives, ought they not? They are laughable with their sly trickeries to catch their myth. That man is completely mistaken"—(oh, Jennie, Jennie!)"—and that big dog recognizes me because I lived one summer on the seashore, and played with him every day on the sands when he came there with his mistress, possibly your Jane Vail. Sir Marcus, Miss Ingrave is simply jealous of me, and anxious to have me worried out of the house. Don't heed her. Lord Adderley, of course, must side, gallant man! with his lady love. Don't heed him either. Pay the man and send him away."

The plotters exchanged another significant look of anxiety and wonder.

Sir Marcus's brow cleared by another hair's breadth.

"Why don't you advertise for Marian Brace's friends to come and identify her?" pursued Jane, mockingly, returning to my lord and his lady love.

"Why persist in making me out somebody else before you have satisfied anybody that I am not she? Prove that! prove that! Ha, ha! you can't!"

Sir Marcus's brow grew bright as the sun; his arm slipped round her waist.

"Hang 'em all, I say!" said the baronet, with fervour. "Let 'em prove that before they come pestering and bothering us. Yes, my dear, just let them dare to meddle with us again, and—humph! they'll have me to deal with, that's all. We'll keep our own counsel, too, my dear, about who you were before Lawry was stupid enough to marry you. No offence to you, my dear. You know what I think of you for a woman, quite another affair for you for a match. Confounded idiots! they've got one idea in their heads, and that's Jane Vail. Can't you wait till your Jane Vail betrays herself—poor lass! I fancy she's as frightened of you as you are of her—and not outrage and insult my son's widow? Horseley, you donkey, you might have had better sense than to put your finger in the pie. Be off to the kennels with these brutes of yours. I'll have another look at them there."

"Yes, sir," muttered the dog-fancier, scratching his bristly head wildly. "I saw the advertisement askin' Jane Vail's friends to communicate with Lawyer Grayley down at the village yonder, and I come along for to tell that she wore killed; and were sent up here."

Lord Adderley and Miss Ingrave had drawn close together, and were silently taking each other's opinion of all this.

Baffled fury darkened each visage as the dun storm cloud darkened the heavens; for now the first drops of the tempest were falling. Poiled by Jane Vail's audacity and Sir Marcus's obstinate incredulity, their case, proven as it was, fell to pieces. They were utterly routed.

"Yes, the colonel's widow!" echoed Jane Vail, facing round on the cowering Horseley. "Go and find your proofs that I am not she, and then I will admit that I am Jane Vail. Ha, ha, ha!" and, in her mad excitement, she burst into a ringing peal of laughter, in which Sir Marcus joined with a roar of boisterous merriment, patting her on the cheek to mark his approval of her spirit.

As if that laugh of mingled defiance and credulity had reached the Heavens and challenged the supernatural powers, a flash smote their eye balls, a thunder-clap deafened their ears and a mighty turmoil of all the elements broke loose.

The tremendous roll overhead as if all the artillery of Heaven were thundering; the slashing of the aerial canopy here and there and everywhere as if by the sword of divine wrath; the wild outrush of the blast, and the torrent, and the distinct sulphurous odour seemed to menace the hardy impostor with instant annihilation.

They all turned to look at the sudden convulsion of nature. And when they saw the black, hollow clouds belching forth flames, and the strong trees bending to the ground under the gale, and the sheeted rain whistling by, a very smoothen, they forgot the mental tornado which lately had absorbed each soul and trembled before the weird spirit of the storm.

The dog-fancier's horse made one frantic leap and disappeared round the house, the hounds cowered low and seemed as if they would worm themselves into the earth, and old Snath pressed close against his mistress with a long, eldritch howl.

"Come in, all," shouted the baronet, backing into the ancient hall where the arms of his ancestors glimmered in the lightning's ray as if the ghosts of the dead grasped them.

Lord Adderley and Miss Ingrave stepped hastily after him.

Miss Ingrave was white with fear, and, flinging herself on the nearest chair, she shut her eyes, stopped her ears and shook convulsively.



[LEAVING NO TRACE.]

Lord Adderley turned from this pitiable sight with the impulse of vivid curiosity to see how Jane looked.

She was still standing in the doorway, a tall, white, statuesque figure apparently intent on the passage of the storm.

A half-fierce, half-enraptured smile curled his lord's terrible mouth.

He softly stepped to her side—she did not see him—and gloated over her entranced pose, on the rapt gaze of her wild, electric eyes, on the abandon of the woman's soul to the passing demon of destruction.

"Grand, reckless creature," whispered Lord Adderley—but she did not hear him. "Upon my soul you deserve the victory."

Intent on her, he did not observe that she was intent on something far more awful than the wildest tempest that ever raged.

That something was a man.

He was toiling up the avenue against the roaring gale, now snatched from sight in the murk of a lowering cloud, now projected into brilliant distinctness by a glare of lightning, like a figure in a magic lantern.

Do the dead indeed rise?

Has he come from his grave—an awful apparition curdling the blood and turning the brain—Heaven's most terrific instrument to punish her for falsehood on the spot where it was uttered?

"Prove," she had said, with mad laughter, "that I am not the colonel's widow."

Here then, with tempest and fire, approaches a spectre of the dead to answer the challenge.

Her senses reeled, a frenzy of terror seized her, she uttered a piercing shriek—it was heard above all the din of the hurricane—and staggered back from the door. She would have fallen in a swoon had not Lord Adderley caught her in his arms, and with that strange mingling of savage admiration and a ferocious desire to tear her to pieces, gazed green-eyed into her ghastly face.

"Aha!" muttered he, with horrible zest; "the brave impostor wears a woman's heart, does she? Wait awhile, Jane Vail, Dimon Adderley has sworn to have the handling of that heart yet!"

That touch sent a shock of life through her. Had she been clasped in the toothed arms of the Inquisitorial "Maiden" she could not have torn herself free with more supernatural strength.

Sir Marcus received her in his arms, inveighing lustily at my lord's impudence—in pantomime, of course, for in the wild wrack little could be heard.

Jane did not faint; on the contrary, a curious reaction took possession of her.

From swooning fear to despairing strength 'tis but a little step.

For the second time within the hour she paused on the brink of the abyss and bethought herself.

Her brain suddenly cleared. In a flash of inconceivable brilliancy she saw and comprehended her position, even down to its minutest details.

In the excited and exalted state of her mind she therefore instantly realized that since there are no ghosts of dead men walking the earth the apparition she had seen was Colonel Thorncliff himself!

However inexplicable that the man whom she believed dead when she laid down his head on Morley Moor should be yet alive, such her sharpened intellectual faculties assured her was the fact.

Colonel Thorncliff was coming up the avenue of Childerwich; Colonel Thorncliff had but to cross that threshold, and in one word speak her doom.

Stay!

Mercy was shown her once. Her mind seized and sketched with lightning rapidity the scene in the rectory of Little Catesby. There could not be two fiends on earth as cruel as Dimon Adderley. Again her mind flashed out the picture of my lord in the gloom at the summer-house, tempting Annabel Ingrave to murder her. Might not mercy be shown her again? The picture of Morley Moor, with the colonel telling how he loved his stepmother shifted into the picture of the fire scene and my lady in flames in her arms. Was it not better to fall into the hands of the man she had injured (the scene in the summer-house, where she destroyed the colonel's trust was in her mind) than the man who had sworn to injure her?

Her case could not be made worse; it might by a miracle be made better.

Haste then, Jane Vail! clutch the passing straw! She stepped to the door.

There he was, thirty or forty paces from the door, toiling up against the wind—Colonel Thorncliff's very self.

She darted out into the storm and flew down to meet him; and, oh, laughable incongruity, Snath trotted at her heels.

Sir Marcus and Lord Adderley sprang, together, to see where she was going.

"Why, what the—"

"Heavens! who is that?"

"Doesn't it look like—But pshaw! impossible!"

"Astonishing! Colonel Thorncliff! She flies to greet him!"

The gale swept her on; the rain drifted her faster. The man, with his head on his breast and his should-

ders to the blast, saw something white flash up to him and bar the way.

He stood still.

A woman, pale as death, bareheaded to the storm, her white garments streaming in the wind, her wild, beseeching eyes riveted upon his, and her ashy lips gasping out something—amazing vision!

Colonel Thorncliff stared in amazement.

She plucked her hands out of a white silk scarf in which they were folded, and clasped his arm.

Then he heard what she was saying.

"Colonel Thorncliff, for Heaven's sake, say I am your wife, Marian, only for an hour!—one short hour!—my very life depends on it!"

Colonel Thorncliff actually staggered back.

"They are watching us from the door," panted the wild vision, clutching him again, "they have their suspicions of me. Oh, have mercy! have mercy, and save me from the consequences of the maddest thing that ever poor girl attempted, and, Heaven knows, I did it in a good cause!"

"What—what does the woman mean?" stammered the astounded soldier.

"I dare not stop to explain!" cried she, pressing his arm and gazing up with headlong urgency and vehemence, "give me but breathing space; save me for one hour and you shall know all whenever we are alone. Will you call me your wife for an hour, Colonel Thorncliff? Will you? will you? will you?"

"You—you—positively you are mad!" gasped the colonel. "Who in the world are you? Aren't you the girl that I saw on Morley Moor? Yes, you are. There's your dog. I sent you—"

"Will you?" shrieked Jane, clinging frantically to him. "Sir Marcus is coming—save my life, will you?"

Yes, Sir Marcus was indeed stamping down the avenue, with eyes bursting from their sockets, and my lord was slinking at his heels.

"I—by George!" gasped the colonel, stupefied into staring at her and twisting his dripping gold moustache.

She gave him a look of anguished reproach, and dropped his arm.

"Oh!" wailed she, in a voice of thrilling despair, "he won't; I am lost."

She turned dizzily to walk away. Earth and sky reeled before her, then grew black. She staggered and threw up her hands wildly.

Suddenly she felt a pair of arms seize her, and sustain her, while a voice said in her ear:

"All right, girl—for an hour you are my wife, Marian—for the sake of that day on Morley Moor."

(To be continued.)



[THE DEAD ALIVE.]

FATE.

By the Author of "Nickleboy's Christmas-Box,"
"Maurice Durant," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Better be with the dead,
Whom we to gain our place have sent to peace,
Than on the torture of the mind to lie
In restless ecstasy. *Shakespeare.*

LADY MELVILLE seemed shy of visitors. All who called at Rivershall were denied; showers of cards from old and new friends fell disregarded.

Mr. Besant himself, who, now that the house had been thoroughly cleansed, had ventured to pay a friendly visit, was refused, and rode away as black in the face as his mourning coat.

People said that even the poor dead-and-gone squire had been more sociable, and grew curious to see this lady who, once the glass of fashion, now shut herself up in her newly acquired house and played the hermit. The ghost stories current in the kitchen spread to the village and thence to the county.

The magnates of the district wagged their heads and sighed plentifully.

"Ah," said they, "something wrong there, sir, you may depend upon it. Never could understand the Melville family, never. Always touched, in my opinion," and the wise one would tap his forehead significantly.

But Lady Melville was not mad, she was only low-spirited and nervous. She grew more nervous each day, and at length reached such a pitch of timidity and feeble-mindedness that Miss Lucas was obliged to accompany her on the short trips across the great hall or up the long corridor, and even then my lady would quicken her steps at the slightest noise, and looked on either side of her with fearful half-glances.

The shallow pretence which Miss Lucas had broken through on the occasion of Lord Harcourt's visit was kept up now in the strictest and most vigilant manner. It was always with an air and tone of respect that the governess spoke or listened to her mistress, and she never addressed her without the prefix of "My lady," or "Your ladyship."

The greatest stickler for outward respect could not have found a crevice in Miss Lucas's armour of behaviour in which to lodge the arrow of complaint; yet all the while the broken-spirited, fearful-hearted woman knew that she had taken her quiet companion's yoke, and that it was galling to her soul.

The summer wore on—it had brought no gladness to the mistress of Rivershall; it had brought the most intense anguish to Clarence Clifford; its time

had been fraught with great disappointment to Lord Harcourt, and to all three the coming seasons were without hope.

Without hope to Lady Melville they were for a certainty, for as she sat by the fire—the drawing-rooms, great and small, were never without one—she thought bitterly of all she had done to gain that which had turned to Dead Sea fruit on her lips. She had not gained all she had plotted and signed for even.

Here was Rivershall her own to remind her daily, hourly, of what she had done to gain it. But where was he, the stern, sad-hearted Claude Ainsley, the man she loved more than she had loved any one?

She had an instinctive assurance that Miss Lucas knew, and yet she would not, could not ask her, and as she sat beside the fire gazing into its depths with hollow eyes she wondered if he would ever come, if the woman who held her in her power would choose to fulfil her promise and bring him.

As she thought this she shuddered. What was love but a mockery to her now?

To lose her thoughts she rose in her fearful, nervous fashion, and stole to the window, very much as Lillian Melville might have stolen, save that hers was pure grief and this woman's remorse.

It was sunset, the evening closing in; to the proud, regretful woman the hour was typical of her mood. The days were closing in and she felt it; all the sky was red and fierce—the spirit of unrest sat heavily upon her.

With a sigh and a shudder she opened the casement and stepped on to the lawn. It was the first time she had been out for some days.

The air seemed strange to her and she drew her shawl of pure China crepe more closely round her.

Yet the evening was inviting, and with listless feet she wandered to the rosary and thence into the shrubbery.

At the commencement of the thick growth of dark-hued plants she stopped; gloom of every kind oppressed and frightened her.

As she turned to go back to the drawing-room she heard a voice talking in a low key within a few feet of her.

The mistress of Rivershall started and paused. To whom could her mistress be speaking within the secret ambush of the shrubbery?

With a desire to learn something that might give her some little power over the woman who held so much over herself she shrank into the shrubs and peered through the leaves.

It was a man, tall and commanding of figure; the face was turned from her.

She waited, trying to catch his voice, but he spoke

only once and in so low a tone that she could not catch it.

She could see Miss Lucas's face, however, and that was a study, such passion bursting through the evident effort to restrain it, and working on the thin lips and gleaming in the gray eyes.

She was talking fast, trying either to persuade or convince, and once the silent watcher thought she heard her own name.

The man listened to it all and seemed, as he looked, immovable.

Miss Lucas's voice grew louder, and Lady Melville, straining her sense of hearing to its utmost limit, caught:

"Wait, wait, I say, a thousand times, wait! Your revenge is none the less, rather it is a hundred-fold! Do wait, Melchior. Look at me. Have I not waited? There is nothing to fear from her; she is a weak imbecile, halting between the grave and the madhouse. There is nothing to fear from him, shut up in France; and for the others, you say they are or soon will be where they will be powerless. All is safe here, and I watch for the day when the consummation shall be attained. Look at me. Oh, Melchior, have I done nothing worthy of a reward? Do not leave me, do not desert me, for if you go it is desertion the cruellest and most heartless. I ask so little. Stay till the time comes. Can you refuse?"

He murmured something and laughed.

The laugh ran through the listener's veins like ice.

"You are eloquent, Kate, and I find it hard to refuse you. But I am impatient; the thunderbolts are ready to my hand, and my fingers itch to let them fall. I am like the executioner of the Reign of Terror, thirsting for the victims. Am I to lean on my axe for ever? No! the dogs shall snuff their heartiest and I will drink my revenge. Look you, Kate, the mother spurned at the gallows as a murderer, the son dragged to the hulks as a forger, and the rest of the family out of the world! It is a great and glorious revenge, atoning almost for my wasted, blighted life; and you ask me to wait!"

"I do," she breathed, catching at his cloak and turning her eyes to his downcast ones. "I do, for I will give you a yet more glorious revenge, cap the edifice with a noble apex. Granted all you say and yet wait and I will put you in their place—master here of their house and lands, sitting, if you shall will it, like an eagle on the ruins of Rivershall!"

"What?" he exclaimed. "How?"

"How!" she whispered, huskily. "She is in my power, I tell you, and must do or sign what I choose. Is it not easy to guess the rest? Rivershall shall come to you, left by the woman who—"

He turned his face at the woman, all ablaze with passion, and Lady Melville saw it.

Yet scarcely saw it, for without a cry she slipped to the ground and heard no more.

Miss Lucas found her there and guessed what had happened. With great care she had her carried back to the drawing-room and laid upon the sofa.

The window was closed and the fire allowed to die out.

Miss Lucas herself secretly charged the servants to deny that they had seen Lady Melville leave the drawing-room, much less had helped to carry her back.

Then Miss Lucas posted herself at the door and waited until her ladyship should come to.

In about an hour the fainting fit gave way and the terrified woman opened her eyes, remembered the garden and the voices, and looked round expecting to find herself amongst the plants of the shrubbery.

Instead the luxurious walls and furniture of her own drawing-room met her eyes.

She rose after a while, saw that the fire had died out, and glanced at the window.

It was closed and fastened from the inside.

All was still within the house, the room had looked as if no one had entered it.

She began to grow suspicious of herself.

"It could not have been a dream," she murmured. "And yet that face!" and a violent shudder shook her whole frame. "That face has been dead for years—years. And if it had not, how could it be possible for that dreadful woman to be connected with it? And yet I remember it all so plainly, so perfectly distinctly. I could repeat every word."

She began to pace the room and at last rang the bell.

"I cannot bear it any longer," she murmured. "I will ask if any one brought me in. They might have done so, and yet they would not, dare not, leave me there without trying to bring me to!"

She rang the bell, troubled and perplexed.

Miss Lucas entered, placid and serene. She stopped near the door with an expression of concern.

"Your ladyship has let the fire out."

Lady Melville looked at her keenly.

"Has no one been in the room for the last hour or two?"

"I should think not, my lady, or the fire would have been seen to. Have you been to sleep, my lady?"

The tone was so carefully respectful and so natural that the bewildered woman put her hand to her head.

Miss Lucas looked sympathetic.

"Your head aches, my lady. I will get you the salts and send Mary to light the fire."

Lady Melville sank on the sofa.

"Stay," she said, hesitatingly. "Where have you been this afternoon?"

"In my room, my lady," was the careless reply.

"I was on my way downstairs, passing the door, when you rang. I have been writing," she added, and just extended her hand slightly, in which were two letters.

"Your room overlooks the shrubbery?" said Lady Melville.

"Yes," said Miss Lucas.

"Did you see any one walking in it?"

"No," said Miss Lucas; "no one. Does your ladyship suspect that there is any one about, any thief?"

"No," said Lady Melville, at last convinced that she must have fallen asleep and been dreaming. "No, get me the salts, please. I have been asleep and have a headache."

Miss Lucas left the room for the salts with a smothered sigh of relief.

"Poor tool!" she muttered. "Nothing between the madhouse and the grave. If he will but wait!"

Meanwhile the individual who was supposed to be tied by the heels in a French maison was at liberty—but not visible.

The feeling of security had been engendered in his former captor's breast in this manner. The tools, Antoine and Jacques, dreading the consequences of their master's wrath, had sent word to tell him what he knew already that their prisoner had escaped. And then, to appease him and avert his wrath, followed up the message by a second one to the effect that they had recaptured him and had him safe.

Doctor Brownell, or by whatever other name the reader may choose to call him, after instituting careful search in the metropolis and failing to discover Clarence Clifford, put faith in the message of his tools, and really believed that this assertion of Clarence Clifford's reimprisonment was true.

Now the unfortunate Clarence's invisibility was to be accounted for in this way.

After his shock on the road he had ridden—fled rather—away from the spot, had reached London and put up at a small inn situated in one of the suburbs. Here he had left the horse, paid his bill, and gone no one knew whither.

For two days he wandered about in the quiet ways of the city—too numbed to care for food or the future. The third day the sense of his misfortune broke fully upon him and then he made a strange resolution.

"I am supposed to be dead," said he, "and to all purposes I am dead. Clarence Clifford shall be no more."

With this decision he exchanged his clothes for an insignificant suit of brown, and hired a single room in a small but cleanly house in the East-end of the town and took to living a solitary life; sometimes remaining in his single apartment for days together, sitting over the fire or moodily gazing from the window on the crowded roof-tops, at others wandering about the great thoroughfares, seeing everything yet nothing, hopeless and objectless, waiting for death.

His great love and its bitter disappointment had chilled his faculties. At one time he would never have been brought to believe that he could take the long string of mysterious circumstances as passively as he did now, that he could refrain from hunting out some solution to the enigma of his life, that he could sit still supinely and make no effort to discover the individual who had captured and imprisoned him and follow him to punishment.

But he did sit supinely and he did refrain from the slightest effort to untangle the skein; the image of the woman he had loved and whom he had met on the way to the grave absorbed all his faculties and laid a heavy restraining hand upon his energies.

Certainly in a measure Clarence Clifford was during that term of his existence as good as dead.

Strangely enough without any ulterior motive he had fixed upon his hiding-place at the East-end of the town, without knowing he was within a stone's throw of that quiet grass-grown square in which stood the house of the strange and terrible tragedy of the bank-note forgeries.

Strangely enough he looked day and night from his small window upon the roof that had covered a certain singular lad by name Oli, who had dragged through his boyhood in the atmosphere of mystery and secrecy.

But he was not to remain in ignorance long.

One day, sauntering forth with his pale face looking dreamily vacant and his well-cut lips tightly compressed, as usual with those wearing away under some ever-present sorrow, he turned to the left of the quiet street and walking on with purposeless feet found himself in a silent square. Just glancing at the old houses, he passed round it and so entered another.

In this one something seemed to strike him as familiar. With the air of a man who had fallen asleep for seven years he lifted his low, soft hat and passed his hand heavily across his brow.

He took another look and his heart commenced to beat violently.

It was the place of a surety, and before his mind's eye rose the pale, haggard face of a lad with dark, wistful eyes and regretful, sorrow-stricken mouth. Himself!

With a low groan he stopped for a moment undecided whether to hurry from the spot and its baleful memories or linger and recall them.

Still undecided he looked round and proceeded slowly towards one of the corners where he judged the house should be.

Ah! there it was. His heart from beating violently seemed almost to stand still.

Oh, hateful place, with vile, prison-like aspect and crime-stained stones.

Why, there on the door panels were still the marks and dents of the constable's staff.

Here a railing had been wrenched from its place to force the heavy door, and there in the thin boarding of the upper windows were the sharp holes riddled by the bullets of the men's revolvers.

He grew faint at one moment, then impassioned. He raised his fist and cursed it, brick and beam; cursed it for his wasted, blighted life, for the mystery which shrouded its origin.

"Tomb of my boyhood, stain of my youth, you look down and mock at the ruin of my manhood!" he exclaimed, beneath his teeth; then, as was natural, a flood of softer emotions followed the fire of hate and with a sob he laid his hand upon the railings and went over the past.

When he looked at the grim old house again it was with a new feeling—that of curiosity!

He should like to see the inside, and, more, to go over the rooms which had been his prison cells, to see the room where he had slept, to walk across the room which was stained with double murder, to penetrate those vaults where in the glow of the furnace fire he had played the part of an unconscious coiner and felon.

To dispel that curiosity he left the spot suddenly and quickly.

But he could not get the dreadful old house from his mind. It haunted his waking and sleeping hours, until at last he owned himself conquered by the morbid desire, and found himself walking round the square and loitering before the house again. For days he made it a practice half unconsciously to walk the moss-grown pavement before the house, and to ponder over the years of his early life, and gradually and surely grew on his morbid mind the longing—at last not to be resisted—to see the dismantled rooms once more.

He knew the windows by heart; they were for the most part boarded up. The green stain upon the stone steps was unbroken, the dust upon the door and cobwebs that were woven from it to the lintel showed that it had not been entered for years.

"It is empty," he said to himself one day. "Could I enter without attracting attention?"

But even as he touched the door and found that it was fast and tightly locked some one passed on the other side of the way, and he was compelled to acknowledge that an entry by the front would attract attention and excite suspicion. Then there flashed upon him the memory of the other entrance.

But where was that and how could he find it?

This problem to be solved gave almost a purpose to his life, and with a faint shadow of colour and energy he started next morning on a tour of inspection through the courts whose mouths and outlets were near the spot.

But time the destroyer had also been time the builder, and many of the courts had been removed and filled up with new shops and dwelling-houses.

He almost despaired of finding the court he had remembered when one day he chanced to hit upon it.

A new shop at the corner of its entrance in the great thoroughfare had concealed it from him, and several alterations within it had confused it in his mind, but a small feature of it served to place its identity beyond doubt. In a dark corner of the arch, which served as its entrance, was a carved stone head, a battered, defaced, and almost unrecognizable dragon's head.

Clarence Clifford remembered gazing upon that as a boy, and wondering whether it was the image of a reality, and how its maker had come to think it worth while to put an article of ornament in such an uncongenial spot. There was the dragon's head, more battered than ever, and Clarence Clifford knew that he had found the court.

And now another fear seized him. Should he succeed in finding the old house through which the entrance to the vaults was made?

Very carefully, and taking every precaution to avoid suspicion, he made his inquiries, and at last discovered that a poor family occupied part of a house which had been empty for years, and had only been done up and made habitable for their occupancy. Clarence Clifford knocked at the door and applied for apartments.

The woman told him that she had only a part of the place—two rooms—and that the rest was uninhabitable.

"Why?" said he.

"Rats," said she, concisely.

"Indeed!" he said, "how is that? Are there any—?"

"Sewers," she explained, "runs at the back, and that's where they come from. You can see the rooms if you like."

With an excitement he could scarcely keep from his manner, he followed the woman into the tumble-down place.

The two rooms she occupied were furnished, the remainder were boarded up and delivered up to the rats and dust.

How to take these rooms, which he recognized instantly, without exciting her suspicions was a matter for careful consideration.

He hit upon a bright plan.

"Well," he said, "I am willing to take the rooms, bad as they are, for they will just suit my purpose. I want a quiet place where I can try some experiments in chemistry, and these will suit me."

The woman nodded.

"They ain't fit to live in," she said, sullenly.

"No," he said, "I don't want to live in them."

"And the rats ud eat up everything as is put in here."

"They are welcome," he said, "if they can devour bottles."

He then applied a strong temptation in the shape of an offer of a high rent, and the woman, satisfied and void of suspicion, closed on the bargain.

But with the discovery came a fresh impetus to the curiosity. He had decided not to make adventure that night and tried to gain some sleep, but he could not close his eyes and led to pacing the room. The longing to be within the old house was rapidly growing into a disease.

The following day he purchased a few bottles of

chemicals and placed them in a box. In another he packed a box of matches, a small quantity of brandy, a bunch of skeleton keys and a small coil of wire rope.

Remembering the rats and determined to prepare for difficulties in the shape of barriers, he concealed a revolver and a small crowbar beneath his coat, and carrying his boxes made his way to the house in the court.

To avert suspicion and give an air of reality to his assertion he spent an hour or two in melting some metal and burning some chemicals, then lighting his dark lantern and locking the door of communication with the other part of the house, he commenced his search for the passage.

Remembering the position of the rooms, he was not long in finding it. It was boarded up as the rest of the apartments, mouldy with damp and thick with dust from fallen bricks and rotting mortar. With a throb of exultation he returned for the crowbar, stowed the matches, rope, revolver and keys about his person and stood on the threshold of his journey.

The entrance gave way at the first slight pressure of the bar, and a gust of foul air came to meet him. He drew back for a while and waited impatiently. Twice he lit a match and tested the atmosphere and twice was compelled to wait until the noxious gases had evaporated.

At last there was enough pure air to allow the match to burn, and with the light from his lantern streaming before him walked carefully forward.

There were pools of wet here and there into which the damp dropped with a monotonous trick, trick from the roof; at intervals a brood of rats crossed his path, and once an enormous fellow stopped and seemed inclined to dispute his passage, but the light daunted him, and Clarence Clifford, his longing unabated, went more quickly but still carefully on.

Presently he came to the steps which led to the iron-cased, spring-locked door of the house in the square, and at the first damp stone at the bottom of the flight he paused and wiped the perspiration that, even in the damp atmosphere, covered his brow.

Turning his lantern on either side, he saw that here the damp had given way in places, and that the higher the stairs went the dryer were the walls.

In one or two places he fancied that the green deposit had been pushed off by a passing coat sleeve or a cloak, but the steps showed no little sign of late foot pressure that he felt convinced no human being had passed that way for years, perhaps since the day of the tragedy, and with a sigh he adjusted his lantern and ascended the steps.

Before him, just as he remembered it, stood the iron door, thick with rust, and without the slightest indication of the spring which alone could open it.

As he looked upon it a peculiar feeling came over him, a feeling that was like a positive assurance; he fancied that in a dream or by some other phenomenal way had been conveyed to him that behind the door lay his future, that the sheet of rust-eaten iron barred his way to happiness.

He sighed, and almost groaned at the phantasy, remembering that his happiness was buried in the grave; but the feeling had settled down upon his heart and soul, and he could not divest himself of it as he stood before the door.

Waking suddenly from the reverie which this fancy had produced, he set down the lantern and commenced feeling for the spring. Aware that the sense of touch is intensified if the other senses are at rest, he closed his eyes and gave up his mind to the search.

But though he went over every inch of the iron plating with careful pressure, the door stood as grimly immovable as ever.

He wiped his hand and paused to think. Now that this obstacle had arisen his desire was whetted and augmented.

Come what would, if only by breaking down that door, or cutting his way through, he would enter the house.

He felt in his pockets, hoping haply to find something that would help him, but could find nothing but the keys—which, as there was no keyhole, were utterly useless—and the thin wire rope which he had brought to assist him in any descent or ascent that might be necessary.

An idea struck him. Taking a length of the wire, he held it tightly in each hand, and drew it along the surface of the door from the top to the bottom.

Repeating this experiment once or twice, he cleared off the thick coating of rust which had, no doubt, prevented him from discovering the spring, and set to work with his fingers once more.

This time successfully; the rust removed, the light, even pressure of his hand could not fail to find the slight indentation that marked this portion of the mechanism, and with something that was like a smothered cry he stood back and gazed at the heavy door opening slowly before him.

But with the sensation of triumph came one of surprise. The air that rushed out was rather close and offensive, but seemed that of an ordinary occupied dwelling-house.

Could it be possible that the house was inhabited? With extreme caution he knelt down, grasped his revolver, and darkening his lantern peered into the room.

He could see nothing for a few moments, but presently a slight gleam as if from a firelight seemed to flicker on the air. His heart beat fast and he drew back.

He could not think, he could only stand with the revolver in one hand and the lantern in the other, staring and striving for composure.

Five minutes passed, and he had resolved upon a course of action.

On his hands and knees he cautiously drew himself through the aperture, and remained motionless while he counted twenty, with his eyes fixed upon the flickering fire-gleam.

Then he slowly turned on his lantern. As he had expected, the large screen was drawn across the room, and the firelight came from the larger part over the top of the screen.

He looked round upon the bales and packages which were still there—dust covered and mildewed, and listened intently. He fancied—but perhaps it was the beating of his own heart—that he could hear the regular breathing of a human being behind the screen.

Composing himself and setting his teeth hard, he crawled cautiously to the end and looked round.

Y—s! There was some one there!

The room was furnished, a fire was burning in the grate, and in a chair before it reclined a woman. Her face was from him and a shawl was thrown over the greater part of her figure, but he knew by the attitude and the regular respiration that she was sleeping.

He remained kneeling, his eyes fixed upon her for some minutes, then he glanced at the boarded windows and the door, passed his hand across his brow and repeated some lines of Tasso to convince himself that he was not dreaming, and, finding that he was not, pondered upon a course of action.

First he must secure his retreat.

Rising carefully, he stole back to the iron door, found the spring on both sides, and was about to close the door, but, fearful that some evil chance might surprise him and leave him no time to open it, he set it ajar, and kept it so with his crowbar. Then he took off his boots, placed them on the top step of the passage, and grasping his revolver stole slowly and noiselessly into the room.

Passing behind the sleeping figure, he darted at the door and tried it. It was locked on the outside as he had instinctively suspected; he pushed a bolt into its place on the inside, and, with a feeling akin to security stood staring at the figure and breathing hard.

Who was she? A prisoner; or why the darkened windows and locked door?

He revolved a host of likely conjectures and unlikely ones, but could see no light. One thing he could solve perhaps; he could see the prisoner's face.

Stealing on tiptoe, he passed the chair and stood in front of her.

At the moment he did so the flame fell and the room was dark.

He had left his lantern behind the screen, and rather than chance awakening her he folded his arms and waited.

The flames flickered up again, he turned his eyes upon the sleeping face, and, with a soul that froze within him, saw that it was—Lillian Melville's!

Five minutes passed and he crouched by the antique grate, his eyes fixed like death upon the beautiful face, his lips apart and the breath coming through them in gasps—five minutes that seemed an eternity, and he was dreaming still!

Another minute, and when he did not awake and find himself in his solitary room, struggling consciousness came groping back and told him that he was awake and that the face was no ghost's but hers—Lillian Melville's, whom he had seen carried to the tomb.

He rose, with his eyes still fixed upon her, and with a trembling hand wiped the cold beads of perspiration from his brow. He drew near, then fell back. He stretched out his hand and awe-stricken snatched it back.

He longed to touch, to awake her, and dared not for fear she should prove a ghost or some phantom of his diseased brain.

What floods of emotion swept over his soul in those moments cannot be told.

She was here, come back from death to life, and within reach of his arm!

Oh, fearful mystery!

She moved, sighed, her lips quivered, her eyelids opened slowly and her dark eyes rested upon his!

Motionless, silent as the grave from which she had come to him, they looked upon one another.

Then with a cry that fell broken and crushed from her lips she started to her feet.

With an echoing cry he sprang to her and caught her in his strong, quivering arms.

"Lillian!"

"Clarence!"

Oh, what a world of meaning rang out in those two low-breathed words "Lillian!" "Clarence!" So much that they could find nothing else to say for a space, but stood folded in each other's embrace, drinking in the nectar of each other's existence, and feeding with thirsty eyes on each other's faces.

"Alive!" he muttered, at last.

"Alive!" she repeated, drawing back her head to gaze upon him. "Alive, yes. Did you think me dead?"

"I saw you buried!"

"Buried!" she gasped. "Oh, my father, my father!"

"He?—where is he?"

Her hands clenched in an agony.

"Oh, I do not know. I—oh, let me tell you all."

He would not loose her, but kneeling on the ground drew her to the chair, into which she sank, his arms still round her waist.

She was commencing but stopped short and looked round the room with wild terror.

"No, no!" she cried. "Not here. You shall not stay here, they will find you, they will find you—go, go, go!"

"Never from your side again," he murmured, impatiently. "Never from your side again. Oh my darling, look at me and gain strength to tell me all—all. Look at me and believe that your troubles are all over. Look at me and hear me swear that I will punish those who have wrought this wrong, and rest not till I have brought them to justice. Oh, my love, my only love, Heaven has given you back to me—we will never part in this world again."

(To be continued.)

COAL FIELDS IN CHINA.—The Chinese coal fields occupy an area of 400,000 square miles. Both bituminous and anthracite coal are found of good quality. In immediate proximity to the coal, large deposits of iron ore occur.

THE ROYAL COMPANY OF ARCHERS. The Queen's bodyguard for Scotland, are about to get up a grand ball in Edinburgh in honour of the Prince's marriage. Preparations have already commenced, and the gathering promises to be a great one.

ST. PETERSBURG. Is to be more than brilliantly illuminated on the night of the marriage of the Princess Marie and the Duke of Edinburgh, London will endeavour to vie with that city; for, according to accounts, there will be a display extraordinary on that night in London.

THE GLASGOW ST. ANDREW SOCIETY ESSAY PRIZES.—The 20-guinea and 10-guinea prizes offered by the Glasgow St. Andrew Society for the two best essays on "The Jacobite Episode in Scottish History" have been awarded respectively to Mr. Wil-mott Dickson, LL.D., of the Inner Temple, and to Mr. J. L. Robertson, M.A., one of the masters in George Watson's College, Edinburgh.

CORONALS IN CHURCHES.—The custom of coronals in churches exists in the parish of Abbots Ann, Hampshire. When a young unmarried female dies, of unblemished character, a coronal made of some metal is hung up in the parish church, to which crown are attached five white gloves, one in the centre and one at each corner. Nearly forty of these coronals are suspended from the roof.

THE QUEEN'S AUTOGRAPH.—A New York paper says that a gentleman of that city recently addressed a letter to "Her Majesty Queen Victoria, London, England," asking for her autograph. He received the following reply:—"Sir Thomas Biddulph begs to return the enclosed photograph to Mr. —, and to inform him, in reply to his circular, that the Queen's autograph is never given away.—Buckingham Palace, London, 27th October, 1873."

BALLOONING IN ASHANTEE.—Mr. Coxwell, the celebrated aeronaut, writes on the subject of scientific ballooning in time of war. He says—"If one out of the thousands of tons of railway iron had given place to a few hundredweights of aerostatic equipment, I venture to think we should have been better informed as to the camp at Mampou, and have seen clearly the best and shortest out to Coomassie. We should also have gained a great deal of other valuable information so easily afforded by an aeronautic survey of an unknown country."

GREAT INCREASE OF WILD FIELD BIRDS.—A remarkable increase of wild birds has been observed in the southern counties since the Wild Birds Preservation Act came into operation, and the Gun Li-

cences Bill has also afforded small birds great protection. On the Surrey hills clouds of goldfinches, linnets, and other birds have congregated, and a few weeks since the London birdcatchers netted many hundreds of these warblers and consigned them to market. Farmers, however, have unanimously determined to prevent this system of small-bird poaching, and many of these professional birdcatchers have been warned off the land and threatened with imprisonment if again found trespassing.

WHO IS HE?

By the Author of "Lord Dana's Error," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"It is really you," Mr. Elan said, at last, kissing the giant on either cheek as foreigners do, and then in a burst of emotion dropping his own handsome head as a woman might on his shoulder.

The giant patted his cheek softly, and smoothed his curling hair with his big, muscular hand. Then he gently lifted the young man's face, and made a rapid sign with his hand.

Mr. Elan seemed to comprehend him instantly. He laughed softly, as he brought his hat, and the two went out together into the carpeted corridor.

Mr. Elan started as he saw just beyond the door a man lying on the floor, fast bound with cords, and the giant made a significant gesture with his clenched, hammer-like fist.

The man had a gag in his mouth, so he could not speak, but his eyes looked wicked and angry. No one else was on that floor, and no one on the next.

Something lay in a heap near the outer door, and, looking close, Mr. Elan saw it was the keeper who knocked him down the first night of his coming to this horrible place.

He was bound and gagged like the other.

The giant stooped over him, and took away some keys. Selecting one, he opened the outer door. A flight of rude stone steps appeared, and beyond that a turf court and the covered gateway, which was a side entrance to the Retreat reserved for private and special occasions.

Mr. Giant had the key to this also, and swung it ajar with a magnificent air, but still noiselessly. The two slipped through, he shut the gate and locked it on the outside, leaving the keys hanging.

Then they went on, the giant guiding till they came to the next corner, where a coach waited, entering which they were whirled away along the quiet Hampstead streets on into the busier portion of the metropolis, past these, and stopped at last in a suburb at the farther side, before a broad, massive stone house, old-fashioned and grim in the extreme, covered with moss and buried in creepers.

They entered and stood in a wide, circular sort of vestibule, with a roof and sides of ground glass and a carpet of some long, soft hairy stuff under their feet. A door of thick French-plate glass admitted them to the hall beyond—a wide, bright passage paved with a mosaic of gray, white and pink marble, and having a fountain in the centre, whose continually showering waters filled the air with a delicious perfumed coolness.

Mr. Elan walked on like one in a dream. His giant guide led him at last into a suite of apartments cool and luxurious as the bower of an Eastern queen.

Couches of silk and velvet lined the walls, mirrors shone at every angle, while the lovely statues and gleaming vases, trailing flowers, and heaped fruits made it like a scene from the Arabian Nights.

The giant touched a bell, which tinkled like music far away, yet was answered almost instantly by the entrance of a Moorish-looking boy in a white jacket and silk trousers, bearing a silver salver and silver cups filled with a drink like iced sherbet, which Mr. Elan found cool, delicious and invigorating.

The Moorish-looking boy vanished, the young man sipped the liquid in his cup and lounged upon one of the silken couches, feeling like a prince in a fairy tale, soothed by everything so strange and sumptuous about him, yet burning with curiosity and longing to penetrate the deep and awful mystery which wrapped himself.

The giant stood watching him with his pale, soft, brown eyes, his face inscrutable in the midst of his gladness at the other's joy; his look was thoughtful, his glance troubled, yet determined.

Mr. Elan lifted his excited, intense blue eyes to his expectantly.

"Have you come to tell me the truth at last?" he asked. "It was cruel to impose me, an impostor, on the Trevors; but you meant it in kindness. I was going back to Australia after you when they trapped me. Now you are to tell me the truth—all of it. I have a mighty fondness for you. When I thought myself Bertrand Trevor the most, and felt most secure and happy in the position, I thought of you, and would

have given more to touch your great, strong hand than for all of them. But I must know the truth now; you cannot, you shall not longer conceal it from me. Who am I? Not your son? Fondly as I love you, I feel within me that there is no kindred between us."

The giant sat down, with a serious and anxious face. It seemed that he understood Mr. Elan, though he either could not or would not speak himself. He spelled out the following sentences on his huge fingers, while the other watched him eagerly:

"You shall have satisfaction; but you must be patient. I have made money, money, all the time since I saw you. Be patient, and all shall be well. I found you out by accident. I overheard one of the servants at the Retreat talking about you in a restaurant. I followed him when he went home, and bribed him to let me in the kitchen way; then I found you myself by listening at the door of the doctor's private room. Was I not clever? Have I not always been faithful to you? Patience, then—it is the only way."

Mr. Elan sighed heavily and shook his head. Patient he could not be, but he knew it would be useless urging the giant to any different course from that he had already decided upon.

Meanwhile, far away in that northern county to which Lady Isabel had gone with unhappy Mrs. Craven, other and sad scenes of interest to the characters of our story were transpiring.

Sir Robert Calthorpe, unknown to most of the world, had a solitary possession here, his only wealth in his own right, except Calthorpe Place.

This ancestral possession of his was an ancient, tumble-down, desolate place, a home for bats and owls and all manner of creeping vermin. It stood in such a bleak and barren situation, and had so little that was inviting about it, that no one ever lived there, scarcely. Sir Robert never went near it. He had almost forgotten that he possessed it, indeed, till he suddenly found a use for it, and sent his wicked tool, Crawley, there on an infamous errand.

This deserted and horrible old dunjon, this thick-walled, bat-haunted and mouldy old den, was selected for the abode of that beautiful, fearless, luxury-acustomed child, little Hugh Champion.

When, with his cries for help strangled by the heavy cloak which was tightly wrapped about him, he was torn away from his doting mother, he was borne thither, and committed to the tender mercies of an old woman whose only law was the will of the villain Crawley, and who had neither conscience nor heart, if one might judge from her treatment of this unhappy child.

Young Hugh bore his lot with marvellous heroism and fortitude.

"Tell me where my mamma is," he said, sometimes, to his snarling and wrinkled jailer, "and I won't mind what you do to me. My mamma hasn't any one to stand up for her but me, and it's hard."

The heroic child, accustomed to luxury and indulgence, yet seemed to see in every privation of his own the reflection of some pang of his mother's.

Old Skinny, as young Hugh, in his childish hatred and defiance, sometimes called her, otherwise known as Mrs. Dibbs, was in despair. Crawley had ostentatiously told her she was to take great care of the child, but had privately whispered her that if she could worry the life out of him in any honest way, she might get well paid for it, and she had devoted her cunning and diabolical energies to this work.

The boy was given the coarsest food and barely enough of that. He had been accustomed to sleep on down and under eider. He was given a dirty blanket and pillowed on damp stones. He had been used to plenty of out-door air, to kisses and kind words. He was caged in a damp, dark court, which the surrounding walls made dismal at midday, and in place of kisses he got curses, and would have had kicks and cuffs, only the old woman was actually afraid of the high-spirited boy.

She had tried it on him once, but, little as he was, he had escaped from under her threatening hand so swiftly, and had faced her suddenly with eyes so black and menacing, so compelling and authoritative, in spite of his stature and her superior strength, that Mrs. Dibbs was awed, and, being a superstitious old woman, had slunk away, firmly believing that the child was protected by spirits.

A year and some months passed, swiftly to some, leaden-footed to others.

It was another fashionable London season. Nearly all the personages of our tale were in town.

Lady Isabel Champion had waked from her long indifference to society and pleasure. With the fate of her little son still an impenetrable and terrible mystery, with the oppression of that false villain and impostor's presence still on her pure, resisting soul, with the horror of having been denied by the man she believed to be her lost and once worshipped Maurice still upon her, she decked herself in gay and

fashionable attire and went forth once more among those festive scenes to which her presence had so long been a stranger.

Lady Isabel was more beautiful, more transcendently and irresistibly lovely than she had ever been. In spite of the vague, impalpable gloom which hung above her exquisite, snow-like brow, in spite of the lurking shadow in her great, dusky eyes, my lady had never been so charming. She smiled seldom, yet she welcomed all, and a touch of the lily hand, garished now with its jewels of fabulous price, a glance from the starry eyes, sweet and kindly yet—if sad—and glowing with a weird lustre none there could read, was sought after with an excitement and eagerness London had seldom seen equalled. The partner whom my Lady Isabel Champion danced with, promenaded with, or what she said, did, looked or wore, came to be the most sensational topic of the fashion-chronicling writers of the day.

Vague whispers concerning my lady were afloat. Vague and impossible romances concerning her found willing and credulous ears to listen to them. Nothing seemed too improbable, no tale too wild for the gaping public to swallow.

Crawley went wherever my lady did. Handsome, richly attired, aping the airs of a gentleman with a sullen, half-downcast, half-defiant air, he was never able wholly to conceal the utter villainess, lowness, and monstrous ugliness of his inner and real self.

Lady Isabel endured him, that was all, and, looking now on her and now on him, people came to saying, very commonly:

"She looks like an angel and he like a brute."

The overpowering interest of fashionable London, and London otherwise, in Lady Isabel Champion, was divided between her and him who had been known to them before as Bertrand Trevor. The new, the real, the undoubted Bertrand Trevor no one looked at except with a sneer, or in cynical surprise at his insignificance.

He who had borne that name for a space and been the lion of the day by reason of his pale, melancholy, romantic beauty, his wealth, his various mysterious attributes and surroundings and experiences, was a lion still, with a new and added halo of mystery and wonder encircling him.

No criminal proceeding had been instituted against him for pretending to be Bertrand when he was not.

No reproach seemed to attach to him, and there were stranger, more exciting and delightful rumours concerning him.

Some mysterious relative of his had turned up, people said, some strange, eccentric personage, who was literally made of money, and whose whim it had been to exchange this, his nephew, with Sir Bertrand Trevor for a time.

This odd and eccentric gentleman was seen everywhere with his handsome nephew.

He wore a diamond as big as a small hazel nut on the little finger of his great white hand, and another glittering stone on his immense shirt front.

He was called Count Ruble, and opinions were divided as to what was his nationality.

He was a very giant in stature, and had an otherwise massive physique. The count's religion was unknown, or only guessed at, but it was said that he had in accomplishment of some vow, penance, or other solemn obligation, bound himself not to utter a word for a whole year. This vow of silence, though he went out so much with his nephew, he rigidly observed.

No one had ever seen him open his lips except to eat or drink or smile, and curiosity was increased accordingly. Everywhere he went his handsome and fascinating nephew was with him, or rather where the nephew went the uncle, the count, was like his shadow, always at his elbow.

There were those who looked on at this uncle and nephew with something more than wonder and curiosity.

There were some in London that season who watched the Count Ruble and his handsome nephew in a sort of fascinated terror. If the Count Ruble and his inscurable nephew could have been reached by any of the clever devices for shortening life which were at the command of Sir Robert, Crawley and Co., they would very soon have slept under six feet of earth. But the count and his nephew seemed always to be surrounded, guarded and watched by an impenetrable cordon of faithful adherents who could not be corrupted.

CHAPTER XXXII.

On the day succeeding that on which he whom Miss Mount had contrived such pleasant quarters for in the Retreat of Doctor Meutis was rescued therefrom a man of gigantic stature and make, with a beard like a bundle of yellow furze, and bristling yellow hair, had waited upon Sir Robert Calthorpe, and been accorded an interview in the most private place Sir Robert could find in the great house in

which he was sojourning. He took him to his own apartments, to a room which had others on either side, which he looked, and then spoke with this man in whispers, so fearful was he of others hearing.

"I thought you were dead," he said, in a tone of rage and fright—he added under his breath, "I wish you were."

Elan, for it was he, produced paper and pencil, and wrote:

"I repent having served you so blindly, Sir Robert. The debt I owed you ought not to be cancelled with wrong. I am sorry for my part in wronging a noble lady, in outraging a noble gentleman."

"Who taught you to write?" demanded the baronet, in a fury of surprise.

A cloud saddened the pale, kind brown eyes as Elan wrote:

"The man from whom I deserved such patient teaching least. Will you do him justice now?"

Sir Robert fairly foamed at the mouth.

"Are you mad?" he hissed. "Do you imagine that after all I have been through I will give everything up so? Never! I have repented a thousand times that I did not mix his dose with poison instead of what I did. But no one knows the truth, no one can prove him to be himself, save you, and you cannot without my aid. I would murder you here in this room if I thought you were in any danger of betraying me."

Elan looked at him a moment. He saw that Sir Robert was horribly in earnest. His weak, small eyes glowed with desperate fires, his womanish face had a hard and relentless look that chilled Elan in spite of himself. The baronet, too, spoke with an air of settled conviction, like one who knew that he could accomplish what he threatened. Elan glanced furtively about him in vague alarm, as if in search of what diabolical engine Sir Robert would make use of to be rid of him.

Sir Robert's white lips twitched nervously. He smiled in a forced and unnatural manner.

"Come," he said, in hypocritical tones, "shall not we be friends? Have you forgotten all that you owe me?"

The calm, sad, brown eyes surveyed him a moment again. Then Elan wrote once more:

"I vowed to keep your secret, and, though I lose my own soul in doing so, I shall not betray you so long as you keep your side of the covenant. You swore not to touch his life."

The baronet gave a sigh of mingled relief and fury.

"Have I not kept my oath?" he hissed through his teeth, with scowling brows. "The more idiot I."

"You have wronged him more almost than though you had taken his life," wrote Elan. "Give him back all, and, if it is money you covet, you shall have more by doing the right than you could possibly gain the other way."

Sir Robert's lip curled in scorn.

"Have you learned to make gold, Elan?" he asked, contemptuously.

"I have worked in the gold mines of Australia, and been more fortunate than most," wrote Elan.

"Humph!" sneered Sir Robert. "Do you know what the mere rental of the Champion estates is?"

Elan shook his head.

"Do right," he wrote, "and I will secure you a clear income of forty thousand pounds a year."

That evil sneer distorted Sir Robert's countenance once more.

He did not believe him. He thought it was simply impossible.

"See that you keep your oath to me," he said. "I will take care of the rest."

"And you refuse my offer?" Elan asked, with his pencil, a solemn silence in his glance.

Sir Robert laughed in his face.

"Yes, I refuse it."

Elan rose to go.

"You will keep your oath to me?" Sir Robert asked.

"Till you release me from it," Elan wrote sadly, but with a stern and solemn earnestness that the baronet did not think of questioning.

Sir Robert imagined that he had no more to fear from his once serf Elan. So far as that conscientious and grateful old servant was concerned he thought he was safe. The tale of his wealth obtained in the gold mines he did not for a moment credit. He thought the man had made some money, a few thousand pounds perhaps, and in his ignorance and exultation imagined it to be an inexhaustible fortune.

Sir Robert's amazement, dismay, and terror when he first met Count Ruble were beyond description.

Count Ruble met him like an utter stranger. He had black hair and no beard, and a complexion as dark as a Spaniard's. He had always a pair of gold eye-glasses stuck on his nose, and he used a gold-headed cane and had a pompous air, and behaved

like a man of wonderful wealth and distinction. He dressed with exceeding richness and taste, and had the bearing of a man accustomed to the life of a gentleman. He was not like poor, uncouth, ill-dressed, dumb Elan except in his size and his silence.

Loth as he was to believe such a thing, impossible as it seemed, Sir Robert could not get rid of an uncomfortable fancy that Elan and Count Ruble were one, and that somehow his downfall and ruin were on the way.

This, then, was the secret of Lady Isabel's return to society. This was why she dressed and rode and danced and went everywhere—that she was asked when her heart was breaking—that she might watch the mysterious, handsome nephew of Count Ruble.

Miss Mount was in society also. She had gone back to her aunt, Lady Trevor, and was invited with the Trevors. She looked somewhat pale and strange, an odd glitter had grown in the hard, gray eyes, and an odd hectic flush in the face, which was as handsome as ever.

She and Count Ruble's nephew never spoke or exchanged the smallest courtesies. Count Ruble's nephew had a vivid recollection of what she had caused him to endure, and a vivid imagination concerning what might have been his fate had not his old friend come to his rescue so unexpectedly.

There was one more upon whom Count Ruble made a profound and terrible impression—that was Sir Bernard Trevor. He was haunted with no such fancies as disturbed Sir Robert Calthorpe. He had no suspicion that the man he had tried to murder had escaped him after all. What he did fear was that this mysterious count and his nephew might between them manage that destruction which he knew he deserved. He strove in vain to guess the truth in the nephew's blue, deep, fathomless eyes. But he might as well have looked into the boundless sea for information.

Count Ruble's nephew had been ceremoniously presented to Lady Isabel. They met as strangers meet outwardly. Lady Isabel was able—for she had steeled herself—to meet him with cold hauteur, and smiles so chilling that it was like the sunlight on an iceberg. However her torn and outraged heart leaped at sight or sound of him she still firmly believed to be her husband, no one would have guessed it, looking at her beautiful, ice-cold face, meeting the flashing and disdainful radiance of her great black eyes as she encountered him.

The two exchanged few courtesies, but wherever she moved Lady Isabel knew that his glance followed her as if without his will, and in spite of her despair and resentful anguish the consciousness thrilled her over into a more brilliant loveliness, and clad her proud, sweet eyes with a more dazzling yet softened charm.

"He loves me still, shamefully as he has wronged me!" she said to herself at such moments, and more than once was on the point of seeking him and once more appealing to him.

But pride, a natural and justifiable pride and resentment, withheld her. She looked upon herself as deserted, scorned, outraged, denied and defied by the husband she had worshipped so blindly—she who had half London at her feet, and might have wedded the proudest among them had she been free to give herself to any.

Lord Champion—that chronic invalid—had wonderfully improved in health from the period of his first introduction to the reader. Perhaps excitement was good for his lordship. Certainly since he had begun to take such an interest in the affairs of Lady Isabel he had constantly gained in strength and looks, and had nearly forgotten to dose himself constantly with the various nostrums prescribed by his physicians. He watched the events about him in a strange state of wonder and bewilderment. He could not approve much that Lady Isabel did, and strove often to dissuade her, especially as to remaining under the same roof with the impostor Crawley, and outwardly acknowledging his claim by appearing in public with him, but he did not condemn her as he had once for a similar course. He was her fast friend, not to be changed now by any course of hers, or through any freakishness of his own variable and peevish temper.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PERHAPS of all who have figured in this recital Lord Champion had the keenest intuitions, the readiest judgment. Without any of those clues which were in the possession of the others he yet set forth by a direct road toward the solution of that mystery which had resulted in such outrage and anguish to some of our characters. He did not know, he little guessed whether he was going, but from the hour in which he faced Crawley and defied him to fury he had gone almost directly forward to the true end.

Lady Isabel had not encouraged him in his speculations. Having seen her husband, or the man she believed to be him, and been denied by him, her impulsive nature leaped at once to the only conclusion natural—namely, that the husband she would have died for, and whom she had always till then adored as the embodiment of all that was good and noble, had become the most false, base, and treacherous of human beings. Hence she listened coldly whenever Lord Champion attempted to expound any of his theories concerning lost Maurice.

These theories indeed astonished even his lordship and made him almost incredulous of his own reasoning when he saw whither they seemed so surely tending.

Lord Champion had never known lost Maurice intimately, as we have said before. They were distant kinsmen, but had seldom met. Yet that slight intercourse had impressed Lord Champion profoundly with some of the characteristics of the husband of the beautiful heiress of so large a portion of the Champion wealth. He had, perhaps—for he was selfish and querulous as men and invalids are sometimes—he had, perhaps, envied and disliked Maurice Champion because he had stepped so easily into the possession of so large a portion of that wealth which he—Lord Champion—had been in the habit of regarding as belonging to the title that had come to him. But he had not been able on that account to be insensible to the geniality and rare attractiveness of Maurice Champion.

He sought an acquaintance with Count Ruble's nephew; he pursued it to intimacy as much from real pleasure in the young man's society as from a premeditated resolve. He found himself always attracted and more attracted the longer he knew him.

Lord Champion's latest theory, or rather the latest form of that theory, was that this gentleman, known for a period as Bertrand Trevor, and in that name claimed and identified by Lady Isabel as her husband—that this gentleman, afterward introduced to the world as the nephew of Count Ruble, and the chief actor in an imposture so strange and incredible that only the evidence of his own senses substantiated it to his lordship—that this nephew of Count Ruble, once known as Bertrand Trevor, now looked upon as the only living relative and heir of the count, whom he bore no resemblance to whatever—that this gentleman was indeed and in reality what Lady Isabel claimed him to be, her lost husband.

He did not discuss this final conclusion of his with Lady Isabel.

Instead, he sent for the gentleman himself—and while he—Verner Ruble as he called himself now—sat dumb with amazement and incredulity, he gently unfolded his darling theory and supposition.

The young man heard him through uneasily. The gloom of his handsome face deepened rather than otherwise. He looked up with a forced smile but his lips quivering.

"I would be willing to die if dying could make your words true," he said, "but you are undoubtedly influenced by Lady Isabel Champion's strange fancy that I am her husband. I have been told also on good authority that she denies—refuses to accept as such—the gentleman known to the world as her husband; I have been told also more than once that I resemble him in an extraordinary degree. I cannot see it myself."

"There is certainly a resemblance," Lord Champion said, "there must be one, when I detect him and am fond of you. Oh, yes, I can see there is a marked resemblance in general features, but I said from the first that he was not Maurice Champion, and Lady Isabel said the same; I say also that though I knew Maurice Champion so little before his mysterious disappearance you are far more like my remembrance of him than the low churl who has usurped his place."

Verner Ruble smiled again, half sadly, half in sarcasm.

"Will you tell me how I am like him, my lord? How unlike?"

Lord Champion's pale face flushed. He felt at every step the absurdity of the position, but his faith in it never quite failed.

"You have such hair and eyes as Maurice Champion had. Both were somewhat peculiar, the hair dark and curling in large loose rings like yours, the eyes of the darkest blue I ever saw. You are of his height and general build, perhaps a little slighter, and therefore seemingly taller, but that difference is very small. My impression of Maurice Champion was that he was warm-hearted, frank, generous and impulsive. All his former friends call him so, and murmur at the change in him; as though that base changeling called by his name could be he. You are unlike Maurice Champion in your taciturnity, your gloom and reserve. I have thought much upon it, and honestly I can only see that difference."

Verner Ruble drew a long, passionate sigh. Then

he buried his face in his hands, and Lord Champion heard him murmur, in an anguished voice:

"Good Heaven, if it were only true!"

He looked up after some moments, his beautiful, sad face pale but calm.

"Will you—may I trouble you to repeat your reasons for supposing I may be Maurice Champion instead of this gentleman whom a court of law has pronounced to be he? Your reasons, I mean, apart from the resemblance."

"It is no trouble—I like to go over the points," Lord Champion said, eagerly. "The more I look at them the more conclusive they appear to me—the harder they seem to get over."

"First, then?"

"The first point, of course, is my own conviction, backed by Lady Isabel's, that Sir Robert's low-born protégé is not the true Maurice Champion, Lady Isabel's husband. She maintained that from the first, and so did I. They have tried to murder her, she says, for her incredulity and obstinacy, and I have no reason to doubt her."

"You believe Lady Isabel to be entirely sane?" questioned Verner Ruble, his face contrasting painfully.

"I am as satisfied of her sanity as I am of my own," said Lord Champion, firmly.

"You have only told me why you doubt the identity of the gentleman who is known as Maurice Champion at present."

"Because the very fact that he is not acknowledged by Lady Isabel, taken with that of your greater resemblance to the true man, makes that an important point."

"True. Your next reason—"

"Is that the true Maurice, so far as I can discover, was despatched to Australia by his enemy, and you came from there with Sir Grenville Trevor."

"How do you know that the true Maurice Champion was sent to Australia?"

"I don't know—that is, I cannot prove that he was; but I am satisfied of it myself."

"Have you reasons that are proof to yourself?"

"Yes, when I put them with other things. The year that Maurice Champion disappeared so strangely a lady and gentleman, acquaintances of mine, people who knew him too, went out to Australia. The vessel they were in picked up a couple of men in a boat off the coast near Kinston Wold, as nearly as I can make out. One of these men was a sort of mute giant, answering to the description of a fellow who was once in the employ of Sir Robert, and who was reported to have been drowned about that very time. The other was a man afflicted with some strange illness, which seemed to have reduced him mentally and physically to the state of an infant. He had to be lifted and cared for in all respects like a child. These friends of mine, Mr. and Mrs. Vane, took an extraordinary interest in the poor gentleman from the first. More: they were both powerfully struck with his resemblance to Maurice Champion. They had not then heard of his unaccountable disappearance, but each was most painfully affected by the sight of this man, and each said to the other, 'I feel as if I had seen the ghost of Maurice Champion.' I believe they had. I believe that man was Maurice Champion, and that you were he!"

A half-sob broke from Verner Ruble's lips. He was trembling violently. He rose and walked to the window to conquer his excessive agitation.

Lord Champion watched him excitedly. Presently he followed him, laying his hand strongly upon his shoulder.

"You are agitated. Is it at what I said? Do you remember Nora Vane—a fair, sweet girl with hazel eyes and brown hair? and her brother Tom—he had red whiskers and light hair, and a scar over his left eyebrow?"

Verner Ruble turned round. His face was ghastly white.

"I don't remember them," he said, passionately. "I can't remember them. But the name—I know some one like him. Don't you?"

"Count Ruble!" exclaimed Lord Champion, his eyes flashing. "I thought of that; Count Ruble is no count, and his hair and beard are dyed."

Verner Ruble drew a deep breath of excitement.

"His hair and beard are dyed, and he is a mute instead of being under a vow of silence. But he is really a count, and he says I am his nephew. He is German by birth. I suppose I am also."

"How came you in Australia?" asked Lord Champion, presently.

The other shook his head sadly.

"I wish I had gone there in the way you imagine, but I have no reason to believe it."

"Are you sure of that?"

"I think I am."

Lord Champion reflected a moment.

"Of course, if you are sure, there is nothing more to be said. I don't believe you are. Come, if you

were born in Germany, what do you remember of that country?"

An expression that was almost frenzy crossed Verner Ruble's eloquent face. He clenched his hands in agony.

"I must have come away before I began to remember. I remember only Australia. When I try to think I can only go back a little way and I see only clay and mire, and men up to their necks in it; I see canvas tents and diggers' tools—"

"You can only go back a little way?" questioned Lord Champion.

The other clenched his teeth.

"Not more than five or six years. It is a blank beyond that—a black, horrible blank. The thought of it and what might be hidden there has driven me nearly to madness many, many, oh! many times. My uncle says I was very ill of a terrible fever, and that it impaired my memory. He tells me I lived in Germany before that, and that he took me to Australia with him, in the hope of restoring me."

"And you believe him?"

"I have never had any reason to doubt his word. He loves me fondly, and, though he always until recently concealed from me our relationship, and his own rank and nationality, he explains his silence now to me in a way I have no reason to doubt."

"Have you ever tested his assertions in any practical manner?"

"I could not bear to doubt him, he is so fond of me."

"Ask him to take you back to the place where you were born, to show you someone who knew you both there."

Verner Ruble shook his head again.

"I owe him too much. It would seem too much like doubting his word. I can't. It would break his heart."

"At least you might write and make inquiries."

"I have done that," the young man said, flushing as if with shame at the act. "I would not rest till I had."

"You have?" cried Lord Champion, with wide eyes. "Did you get an answer?"

"Yes. A Count Ruble and his nephew did go from that portion of Germany at a period corresponding to my uncle's description. The nephew was reported to have perished on shipboard. A false report of that kind might easily enough have arisen. I have every possible reason to believe that it was a false report, that I am that nephew, and that instead of dying I lived a miserable wreck."

"Why, if this is true, did your uncle wish you to pass for the son of Sir Grenville Trevor?"

"He says he did not wish himself to return to his estates in Germany, that he had family reasons for hating the thought of going back, and that when Sir Grenville himself made the proposition to him the cleverness of the thing fascinated him."

"But Sir Grenville did not make the proposition. I have means of knowing that your uncle, as you call him, made the offer on his side to save the son of Sir Grenville from the consequence of a crime which he had committed, and to bestow upon him an immense property, on condition that he adopted you as his son and presented you to his wife and child and the world as such."

"It is possible. The proposition might have come from my uncle. That fact does not alter the force of the main argument."

"Only so far as it proves that he has deceived you on that point, and if on that why not on others?" said Lord Champion, coolly. "I should very much like to know if the Count Ruble, who quitted Germany as such, resembled your uncle very nearly. Did you ask in your letter of inquiry for a description of Count Ruble?"

"I did not."

"Then the first thing to be done is to write again and ask that. Meanwhile, Tom and Nora Vane shall be found if they are alive, and shall be brought face to face with your uncle."

Verner Ruble flushed again. A fierce and startled expression shone for an instant in his dark blue eyes. Then he smiled nervously, and his look softened.

"It is simply impossible," he said. "As I told you I would gladly die to know that what you imagine is true, but it is not, it cannot be. The more I think of it and of that man's devotion to me the more I feel it to be impossible. Why, if you are right, it would make him out to be the most diabolical enemy to me that man ever had, and I can't imagine him that. No, no."

Lord Champion looked at him compassionately.

"Would you object to my speaking to him myself? On my own responsibility, I mean?"

"I don't want his feelings hurt. I am sure you wrong him."

"I will question him without any reference to you—to your knowledge of my suspicions, that is."

"That would look sly in me. I will speak to him myself if you wish it so much. I had rather."

"May I be present?"

Verner Ruble reflected a moment.

"I should prefer not. It would wound him so to think I really suspected him, as I do not, as I cannot, but it would look as if I did, if you were by when I speak to him."

"If he is what I think you are giving him a terrible advantage over you in approaching him thus—arming him beforehand as it were. And I want you to understand that while I am thoroughly satisfied that you and you only are the true Maurice Champion I am not able at present to prove it, and may never be. If I am right the proof can only be got at by unravelling as cunning a plot as ever was contrived. If I am right this man whom you call your uncle is the worst enemy ever human being had, the more that he has so blinded you to his villainy by pretending such devotion. If he is truly your uncle he will only laugh at my suspicions. If he is not some one sharper eyed, less charitably inclined toward him than you should question him."

Verner Ruble did not answer at once. He could not bring himself to consent to put such an affront as this questioning seemed upon so dear and true a friend as he believed Count Ruble to be to him. Then the whole matter seemed so absurd and impossible. At the same time he was perplexed and unhappy—his mind and his heart both cruelly disturbed.

Lord Champion came to his relief.

"Shall we leave matters just where they are? I will not speak to Count Ruble—nor shall you; we will wait till Miss Vane and her brother have seen him. Shall we?"

"Yes," Verner Ruble said, eagerly.

"One question more. You have always been told that the reason you could not remember anything except the events of the last few years was because you had experienced a terrible illness, which destroyed your memory so far as any event in the past was concerned. Do you see how easy—if that illness had occurred to Maurice Champion—it would have been to make him believe he was some one else? Do you not see something too remarkable to be called coincidence in the fact that the singular illness attributed to you is said to have taken place at almost the same period as Maurice Champion's disappearance occurred—at almost the same time as those two men were picked up by the vessel which was taking Nora Vane and her brother Tom to Australia? Is it not too singular a duplication to be credited that two men—mates—should have in charge, in different parts of the world, and at so nearly the same time, two men reduced to the verge of idiocy by disease—or diabolism?" he added, under his breath.

Verner Ruble whitened again. His very lips were ashen—his breath came in quick pants.

"For Heaven's sake!" he said, in a hoarse, uneven voice, "say no more now or I shall go mad with the thought of the possibilities you suggest. I feel as if I were mad sometimes, such frightful ideas beset me!"

Lord Champion went at once and laid his arm over the other's shoulder in a gentle, brotherly way.

"My friend," he said, "you will never go mad, or if you do it will be with joy. The more I examine into this diabolical business the more I am convinced of that. If I live—never mind—I'll yet send that villain back to the stable he crawled out of, and Sir Robert—"

He did not finish the sentence. Verner Ruble had suddenly dropped his head upon his bosom, and fainted dead away. Lord Champion was barely able to save him from a heavy fall. He let him down upon the carpet and rang for assistance.

It was a long time before consciousness returned, and my lord blamed himself bitterly as he watched the beautiful white face, so death-like in its solemn pallor and rigidity, so touching in its marble sadness. He noticed too now, for the first time, how frail and worn Verner Ruble looked, so thin and pinched about the delicate nostrils, so hollow and attenuated at the temples, so sunken about the eyes.

"Good Heavens! how he must have suffered," he said to himself, "and I never mistrusted it. It must be torture to a man of his exquisite sensibilities to be as he is. Why, even I—I think I should nearly lose my senses if I were suddenly cut loose from all my past life, and set to begin again without a single memory of it, haunted only by vague and perhaps terrible imaginings of what might have been—the loves, the hates, the crimes that might have peopled it. What must it be, then, for him not to remember all that I believe his old life held! I will be more careful in future about exciting him. If what I suspect is the truth, it would be only natural that his nervous system should be terribly racked."

(To be continued.)

MR. HOLMAN HUNT'S PICTURE.—The vast number of persons who have been to see the "Shadow

of Death" shows that the interest in the works of this remarkable painter is as great as even his "Finding of the Saviour in the Temple" was, exhibited now more than ten years ago. At that time for several months the numbers averaged 800 visitors a day—this time the daily average being a thousand. The picture was bought of the painter by Messrs. Agnew for the unprecedented sum of 10,000 guineas (10,500*l.*), and the price required for the picture is said to be 15,000*l.*, with possession at the end of seven years.

SCIENCE.

ACTUAL experiments show that water which remains overnight in lead pipes contains 1·10 of a grain of lead to the gallon.

BLEACHING SHELLAC.—Shellac is bleached by exposing it to the atmosphere in thin shreds. It may be easily tested, as it is soluble in an aqueous solution of borax, and can therefore be distinguished from most common resins with which it is sometimes adulterated.

UTILIZATION OF THE TIDE.—Mr. C. R. Huxley says, with reference to utilization of the tides as a motive power for machinery, that a plan is about to be submitted to the Government which illustrates the availability of water as a motive power for all standing machinery, whether for dockyards, arsenals, rivers—in fact, wherever water is within reach. It is calculated that this invention will save the Government 200,000*l.* in fuel alone, and throw into the market, for domestic use, coal in such quantity as to reduce the price of this costly luxury to one half its present figure and cheapen considerably most articles of manufacture.

THE SEA MOUSE.—The sea mouse is one of the prettiest creatures that lives under the waters. It sparkles like a diamond and is radiant with all the colours of the rainbow, although it lives in the mud at the bottom of the ocean. It should not have been called a mouse, for it is larger than a big rat. It is covered with scales that move up and down as it breathes, and glitters like gold shining through a flocky down, from which fine silky bristles wave that constantly change from one brilliant tint into another, so that, as Cuvier, the great naturalist, says, the plumage of the humming bird is not more beautiful. Sea mice are sometimes thrown up on the beach by storms.

THE VINEGAR POLYP.—A very singular present has been made to the aquarium of the Jardin d'Acclimatation at Paris; it is a medusa polyp, which, on the day after its entry into the pool assigned to it, had created a void around it, and skillfully got rid of all its neighbours. How? This was a mystery until the water of the pool was analyzed; the water was found to be converted into a solution of vinegar, and it was apparent that it was one of those very rare molluscs, the vinegar polyp, whose body when plunged into pure water gives presently a strongly characterized acetic solution. The working of this animal is very curious; it produces alcohol, which it transforms into vinegar. The poisonous mollusc was, of course, quickly withdrawn and placed in clarified vinegar in a closed jar, where it will pursue undisturbed the economical manufacture of vinegar.

THE PLANET ATROPUS.—Dr. R. Luther, of the Bilk Observatory, near Düsseldorf (whose planetary discoveries commenced as far back as 1852), announces that he discovered a faint small planet on the 14th of April, 1869, of which he was only able to obtain a single observation. It was therefore impossible to calculate its orbit; but he has decided now on publishing the observation, as being useful in case of its rediscovery. Dr. Luther has given this (as he trusts) temporarily lost planet the name Atropus; but it cannot take its place in the numerical list of small planets until it has become, by farther observation, a permanent acquisition. When he found it in 1869 it was very near Hecuba, a planet which had been discovered by himself only a few days previously.

IMPROVED REFRIGERATOR.—This invention consists in a removable ice-box, fitted into the upper part of the smaller of two compartments of the main box, so that it may be conveniently taken out and put in when desired. The cold air from the ice chamber passes through a pipe and into a horizontal hollow shaft, and escapes through the holes in the sides of the said shaft. To the end parts of the hollow perforated shaft are attached two four-armed plates, to the ends of the arms of which are pivoted the turned-up ends of shelves, so that the said shelves will always hang downward and the right side up, however the shaft may be turned. This construction enables any desired shelf to be turned toward the door, so that anything can be readily put upon and taken from it. The shelves are secured in any desirable position by a long screw which passes in from the front of the box through the end wall of the said

box, so that its forward end may bear against the side of the end of the shaft, and thus prevent it from turning.

THE SEPARATION OF PHOSPHORUS IN TOXICOLOGY.—M. Van Bastelar has published a method of separating free phosphorus in toxicological investigations, from fatty matters, and obtaining the body pure. The agent used is liquid ammonia, which dissolves off the fatty matters, leaving the phosphorus. The suspected material is shaken three times, with an equal bulk of rectified sulphuric ether each time, and the solutions united; and after addition of a small amount of water to protect the phosphorus which may be present from oxidation, the ether is allowed to evaporate spontaneously; a slight heat then suffices to melt the fatty matter and phosphorus, and the fatty lump is then treated repeatedly with ammonia 21 deg. until only the phosphorus remains. The last traces of ammonia are removed from the phosphorus by washing, first with water acidulated with sulphuric acid, and then with distilled water.

PHYSIOLOGICAL PROPERTIES OF CAFFEIN.—The physiological action of coffee, according to MM. Aubert and Haase, should not be attributed to caffeine, but to other principles. An injection of 0·6 cubic inch of coffee containing 0·6 grain of caffeine killed a rabbit in a very short time, producing acceleration of the pulse and respiratory organs, uneasiness, and finally convulsions. An injection of 0·75 grain of pure caffeine, however, did not produce death or even any symptoms of sickness. An infusion of 770 grains of very hot coffee, corresponding to 6·3 grains of caffeine, acts upon a man far more intensely than a stronger dose of pure caffeine. Headache, vertigo, trembling, and similar symptoms are produced, which last upward of four hours. Coffee extract, deprived of caffeine by chloroform and ejected into the jugular vein of a rabbit, causes strong convulsions, but never tetanus, such as is produced by an overdose of caffeine singly.

SUBSTITUTE FOR COAL.—A Belgian journal prints the following curious letter from Hasselt, bearing on the question of a substitute for coal:—"Ten days ago a poor peasant of our neighbourhood went the round of all the coffee-houses with a sack containing earth. He said he had found the means of heating rooms with that substance impregnated with a solution of soda, added to small coal. He made the experiment before a crowd of people, and succeeded. Next day the whole town was in great excitement. Everybody had tried the new discovery, and I did the same. Following the man's instructions, I filled a scuttle three-quarters with small coal, and the remaining fourth with vegetable mould; I then sent for a half-penny worth of common carbonate of soda, which I dissolved in half a litre of water, and then mixed up the solution with the rest. This quantity has been sufficient to warm my room from two o'clock in the afternoon to seven in the evening, at which time I am penning this." Such fuel has, at all events, the advantage of being plentiful and cheap.

STREET PAVEMENT.—A new street pavement has been tried in San Francisco. It is called "hydro-carbonized brick," and is made of bricks of a soft porous nature, which are boiled in coal tar, which, it is said, renders them tough, and nearly as hard as granite. A road bed is made by levelling the sand and packing it with water. A layer of prepared brick is then laid flatwise, each brick being dipped in boiling tar as it is laid down. This is overlaid by a second course of prepared brick placed close together edgewise, each brick dipped as before. The interstices are then filled with boiling tar, and the whole covered with a thin layer of screened gravel. The cost is about 86c. to 37c. (about 34*d.*) per square foot.

IMPROVEMENTS IN THE MANUFACTURE OF PRESERVED MEATS.—A new patent has been granted to Mr. S. S. Riccio, for "Improvements in the Manufacture of Preserved Meat." To obviate the necessity of our cooking the meat when it is boiled for preservation in large pieces it is first cut up into minute particles by means of a chopping-machine. Herbs, salts, spices, etc., are added. The mass is then divided into cases of convenient size, and dehydrated in an oven, etc., at a heat of from 400 to 420 degrees Fahr. After this the cakes are baked in tin cases, one ounce of strong meat jelly is added to generate steam, the tins are subjected to heat in a bath of chloride of calcium; and as soon as a jet of steam issues from a hole left in the lid such hole is firmly closed, the canisters being subsequently subjected to a temperature of from 250 to 260 degrees Fahr. for a short period.

PICTURES BY MR. CHEVALIER.—Mr. Chevalier has just completed his water-colour sketch of the interior of St. Paul's during the National Thanksgiving in February, 1872. The work was painted by command of the Queen, and has just been sent to Windsor for Her Majesty to see. Mr. Chevalier's other picture of the procession in Fleet Street has

been photographed very successfully. The same artist has painted for the Prince of Wales the magnificent staircase of the Austrian Finance Minister's Palace at Vienna, which the Prince occupied during his stay in that city.

RECENT GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

DURING the past year, MM. Stuebel and Reiss have explored the Andes of Ecuador, and ascended Mounts Chimborazo, Aetar, Cotopaxi, and Tunguragua. Among the volcanoes of the chain three exhibit especial characteristics and only one, Pichincha, retains a moderate activity. We note no especial results of the labours of these explorers, beyond the determination of the altitudes and physical characteristics of the mountain ranges and certain trigonometric calculations or observations having for their object the completion of accurate maps of the country.

H.M.S. "Basilisk" has taken possession in the name of the Queen of England of the western coast of New Guinea. This great island is peopled by a long-haired black race known as Papuans, and is said to be very fertile. The "Basilisk" explored the coast for a distance of 140 miles and discovered the bay of Youl, to which the name Port Moresby was given. A channel was also found, which, it is believed, will materially improve the route now followed by steamers between the Asiatic and Western American coasts.

There exist in Copenhagen and Moscow remarkable ethnological museums. That in the former city is comprised of forty rooms, in which are exhibited all the objects and documents relative to the Arctic regions. The Moscow museum has sixty wax figures showing the different races existing in the Russian Empire, of which thirty represent types found in European Russia and the Caucasus. The comparison of the contents of the two museums has recently led to a discussion regarding the Ainos, a race now inhabiting the Saghalien Yesso and the Karle Islands. M. de Quatrefages states that the people once formed a great nation, which extended itself over the Indian Archipelago, conquering the country and founding the present Japanese Empire. The Japanese, however, soon became a distinct race, through intermarriages with the Chinese, and the Ainos gradually disappeared, until only a remnant of the pure stock now exists. They clearly belong to the Caucasian division of mankind, and are also believed to be the progenitors of the Esquimaux of North America.

Dr. Nachtigal, a German traveller, at present engaged in exploring Central Africa, has been recently heard from. He has traversed the shores of Lakes Tchad and Chosi, and arrived at a capital city called Abon-Chen. The inhabitants are violent, quarrelsome, and intemperate, hating strangers, and only ruled by the tyrannical power of their sultan. The commerce consists in slaves, ivory, and ostrich feathers, and flows mainly to Egypt.

M. Delessé announces the discovery of new silver mines at Caracal, near the frontiers of Chili and Bolivia. Sulphides and sulphates of silver are found associated with argentiferous lead.

VALENTINE MANUFACTURE.—Here is a large room, fitted up with long benches, and occupied by some scores of girls of various ages. Each girl has on one side of her a pile of incomplete valentines, and on the other a heap of little objects of some one kind, which it is her duty to add—little bunches of flowers, or glittering mottoes, or aching hearts, or breaking hearts, or trusting hearts, or hearts transfixed by arrows, or it may be a heap of unfledged little Cupids. The audacious little god is unceremoniously picked up on the point of a gum-brush, thrust up into the brightest of blue skies, and the sheet is passed on ready for the next stage, each girl usually adding only one feature to the general design. The poetry of valentines is a study, and so, perhaps, would the poets be if they could conveniently be got at. They, however, are not usually kept on the premises, and it is to be feared that they have not participated in the general progress of the business, for the experience of shopkeepers is rather against the effusions of the bard. The longer the poem the more time is occupied in reading it, and consequently the longer it takes to serve a customer. What with the study and discussion of artistic embellishments and poetical effusions it is sometimes found to take no small portion of a day to serve a sixpenny customer. Condensed feeling, therefore, compact and concentrated emotion, combined, of course, with sparkle and originality, is what is required of the "Seven Dials poet," and for such his lucubrations are as accepted threepence a line is the usual remuneration. Not such very bad pay either, one is apt to think, until it is considered what brain-cudgelling and paroxysms of poetic rapture have probably been expended in spinning unavailing yards upon yards for every line that finds acceptance.



[THE VALENTINE]

AGNES LANE.

AGNES LANE was an orphan, dependent on the charity of a rich uncle. Poor, and withal very plain in face, she was neglected by the gay fashionables who frequented her uncle's house and paid obsequious attention to her fair cousin Gertrude.

But Agnes had a heart—a warm, true, womanly heart it was; but all its outgushing affection was thrown back upon itself. There was within her a wild yearning to be loved, cherished and appreciated. However, as it was, she had but little chance of being treated with even common politeness when her beautiful cousin was near.

Gertrude Arden was beautiful, and to do her justice she was naturally good-hearted, but flattery and fashion had conspired to make her vain and frivolous. Accustomed always to be first in all circles where the stronger sex pay homage to the weaker, she thought not of yielding to her humble cousin those little attentions which make a woman's life an earthly paradise. Gertrude never was unkind, but thoughtless often.

Among the visitors to Mr. Arden's splendid mansion none were nobler, handsomer or worthier than Eustace Clinton, the only child of a deceased millionaire. Every one prophesied that many moons would not wax and wane ere Eustace and Gertrude would call each other by a tenderer name than that of friend, and indeed circumstances seemed to justify the assertion, for Clinton and Miss Arden were constantly together, at the social party, the promenade and the opera.

Agnes saw much of Clinton, necessarily, and she thought him the noblest of all her cousin's admirers. Her enthusiastic soul saw in him one whom the earthly had left uncontaminated—one nearly allied to the heavenly. She felt happy in his presence; she was glad when he came; she sighed when he went away.

Gradually in her lone young heart there had grown a regard for Eustace Clinton, and that regard had deepened into an earnest, self-sacrificing love. It was a strong love, pent up close within her own bosom; it thrived upon the remembrance of a tone, a look, a smile. But Agnes would not have confessed as much to herself; she guarded well her heart, and put a seal upon her lips.

The all-memorable day sacred to Saint Valentine was at hand.

Gertrude was wondering what would be decreed to her on that important day, and in her joyous anticipation she hinted to Agnes that it might be the betrothal ring from Eustace Clinton.

Agnes felt a sharp pain at her heart, as her cousin said this, but hers was a face that told no tales.

Painfully that night did the poor orphan feel her utter loneliness, when the gay, gilded missives, filled with earnest protestations for her fair cousin, were brought in. Of course, there was none for Agnes. Who would notice a poor dependent like her?

Tears came up in Agnes's eyes. Not that she had expected any remembrance, not that she cared for those simple little trifles called Valentines; but if there had been but one for her it would have shown that some one in the wide world thought of her and wished to make her happy on that festive day.

Gertrude tossed the shining tokens into a heap, declaring petulantly that it was too bad for Clinton to disappoint her so, when she had expected something exquisite from him.

Agnes sighed softly—"twas a habit she had when she did not choose to reply to a remark.

Presently the door-bell rang. Gertrude sprang forward.

"It is Clinton's Valentine for me, I know," she said, triumphantly. "I thought it very strange that he should have forgotten me," and she met the servant, who had replied to the summons, in the middle

of the hall. "Letters for me, John?" and she held out her hand.

"Miss Agnes Lane," said John, reading from the envelope.

"For Agnes?" ejaculated Gertrude, in surprise. "Let me have it—quick, quick, John! Who could have been sending a Valentine to our Agnes?"

Agnes had risen at the sound of her name, and stood, crimson with emotion, just within the parlour door.

"Give it to me, Gertrude," she said, eagerly, approaching her cousin, "give it to me, if it is for me."

"Nay, my flattered little cousin," said the gay beauty, laughingly; "wait until I have inspected it, will you? Ah! that is no lover's writing—it is a lady's chirography, evidently; some of your delightful rustic acquaintances, Agnes, so you need not blush about it," and she threw the letter contemptuously towards her.

Agnes picked it up, and hastened to her chamber. It was a delicately enamelled envelope, bore the postmark of a neighbouring town, and was directed to "Miss Agnes Lane," in a fair hand.

Agnes broke the pretty pink seal. There was a tiny sheet of delicate cream-coloured lace-paper, with the simple words, "I love thee," in gilt letters on a pale satin scroll. That was all. Agnes turned it round and round, in search for some letter or word which might reveal to her its origin, but all was pure and stainless.

She sat down and thought. Who could have sent it to her? Who remembered her? Was it true that some one loved her? Did Valentines always speak truly? And poor little Agnes was as happy as any titled countess of the imperial régime.

Laugh, if ye will, rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed maidens! who annually receive bushels of St. Valentine's mystic tokens, but when ye have been, like Agnes, alone in the world, beloved, caressed, and smiled on by nobody, ye will rejoice even in the imagination that one cares for you.

Agnes's sleep that night was sweet and full of pleasant dreams. Of course we would not pretend to say for certain, but we presume that Eustace Clinton figured quite conspicuously in the rosy dream-pictures.

Gertrude laughed at Agnes's Valentine, declaring, with a plying toss of her pretty head, that somebody did it to impose on poor Agnes's credulity, and forthwith the remembrance of the Valentine went out of every heart but one.

Mr. Clinton came, as usual, quite often, taking Gertrude out for rides and to concerts.

The next week after the memorable fourteenth of February the public were thrown into a state of eager excitement by the announcement that the world-renowned nightingale, the fair Jenny, was coming to visit and sing to them.

The admission fees were enormous, and only the "upper tandom" could afford to gratify their sense of hearing by lightening so perceptibly their money receptacles.

Two days before the night fixed on for the concert Mr. Clinton called to solicit the pleasure of Gertrude's company on the occasion of the concert. Gertrude gladly consented and cast a look of triumph at poor Agnes, who was sewing at a window.

Clinton looked that way also.

"Have you a taste for music, Miss Lane?" said he, kindly, passing to her side as he spoke.

She raised her dark, melancholy eyes to his face and said, half sadly:

"Oh, yes, I love music very much."

A pleased expression passed over Clinton's fine face as he said:

"Will you not favour us with your society to-morrow evening? It will increase my consequence," he added, laughingly, "to have two ladies under my care, and Miss Arden will undoubtedly enjoy the music better if her cousin listens also."

Agnes tried to answer negatively, but Mr. Clinton overruled her objections, and so it was arranged that Agnes was to go with Mr. Clinton and her cousin.

Mr. Clinton called the ensuing evening for the cousins, and they all went together in the carriage of the Clintons.

Agnes was enraptured with the singing, and Clinton was very happy in seeing the happiness he had wrought.

The next morning after the concert Mr. Clinton called at Mr. Arden's. Gertrude was out on a shopping expedition; but it was just as well, for Mr. Clinton asked for Miss Lane, so the servant showed him into the parlour where Agnes was seated.

Agnes informed him of Miss Gertrude's absence, adding that she regretted it much, but that her cousin would return soon.

Mr. Clinton arose and took the vacant seat by Agnes on the sofa.

"I do not regret her absence," he said, earnestly. "It's only you I came to see—only you, Agnes," and

he smiled upon her from his dark, thoughtful eyes. "Agnes," he said, again, taking her hands in his, "I have loved you a long time—the Valentine told you so, didn't it? Agnes, I have been getting deeper and deeper in love with your quiet goodness every day of my life. To me you are all that is beautiful and lovable in woman. You fill a void in my heart which has been a void since the days of my earliest boyhood."

Then he wound his arms around her and drew her very gently to his bosom, and Agnes, weary, lonely little Agnes, felt a great load of sorrow raised from her soul.

Very tenderly he kissed her, and smoothed back her dark hair caressingly, and Agnes closed her eyes in deep thankfulness.

And so it came out that Eustace Clinton sent the unpretending little Valentine, and Agnes Lane rejoiced in the true, earnest love of one noble and good.

Gertrude knew it all, after a while, and she pouted and wept after the manner of a spoiled beauty. But the arrival of a lover in the form of a rich gentleman, did much towards soothing her woe, and she even congratulated her cousin on her brilliant prospects.

When the autumn wind began to whirl the sere leaves relentlessly on its wings Eustace took Agnes to his splendid home—his wife.

And she lives, loving and beloved, the idol of her husband's heart, and the cherished one of his household—good and true, if not beautiful. S. T.

EDITH LYLE'S SECRET.

By the Author of "Daisy Thornton," etc., etc.

CHAPTER LVII.

GERTIE still sat bending tenderly over Godfrey when Mr. Schuyler came, and going up to his son called him by his name. But there was no response, no sign, and the physician who stood waiting said: "He hears no one but his sister. Speak to him, Miss Schuyler. See if he knows you now."

Then, over the whiteness of Gertie's face there came a flush at hearing herself called Miss Schuyler in the presence of Mr. Schuyler, but she put her lips close to Godfrey's ear and said:

"Godfrey, do you know me yet?"

"Yes, my Gertie, stick to the ship, we're about ready to land," was the faint reply; and with a bitter cry, as if at the sight of the man who called himself her father every barrier had gone down, Gertie gave way, and, winding both her arms round the form she held, sobbed passionately:

"Oh, Godfrey, my darling, if you can hear me now, listen while I tell you how much I love you, for I do—I do, oh, Godfrey, oh, Mr. Schuyler," and she lifted her white face piteously to him. "Forgive me if I am wrong, I cannot—cannot love him as a brother."

Her head drooped upon her bosom and it was in vain that Godfrey whispered:

"Steady, now, la petite capitaine, the boat is running into port."

She did not hear him, and Mr. Schuyler bore her in his arms into another room, and laid her fainting on a couch with Alice to care for her.

"Will he die—oh, Gertie, is he dying?" was the question Alice asked when Gertie came back to consciousness, and Gertie answered her:

"No, Heaven will not let him die. Pray, Alice, pray with me for Godfrey; he is dear to us both."

And they prayed together earnestly that Heaven would spare their loved one, and while they prayed the vessel touched the shore with a convulsive lurch, but it was on this side the river, where the banks lead back to life, and Godfrey would live, Miss Rossiter said, when just at the dawn of day she came in to the two young girls, who cried for joy at the good news, and kissed each other in token of perfect peace between them.

Gertie did not go into Godfrey's room again, nor was it necessary, as he was very quiet and seemed to be sleeping, while his father sat by him with his head bowed down, and such marks of age upon him that Miss Rossiter noticed it, and asked him if he were ill.

He did not hear her at first, and she said, again: "Howard, are you ill? Have you any trouble on your mind?"

Then he looked up, with a faint kind of smile, and answered her:

"Trouble? ill? No, not ill, and no trouble now, that is past. Have I grown very old, Christine? Is my hair turning gray? I did not like to ask Edith, because, you see, she—the trouble concerned her the most."

Miss Rossiter was sure of it. That woman whom she never liked had shown her colours at last, and here was the result in Mr. Schuyler's bowed form and fast-turning hair. He had grown old and his hair was gray, and she told him so, and added:

"Poor Howard, tell me about it. I knew it must come to this when you married her."

"Did you know anything about it?" Mr. Schuyler asked, in some surprise.

And Miss Rossiter replied:

"Know about what? I knew it was a mésalliance, and they always prove unhappy."

"Hush, Christine, it is not that," and he spoke sternly, as he always did where Edith was concerned.

"Edith is a noble woman. She has been so tempted and tried, and is so broken now. Christine, I wish you were her friend, my friend. I want so much to unburden myself to some one. It would be such a relief. Christine, try and like my wife, and let me tell you the strangest tale you ever heard, and let me feel that we have your sympathy and support in the storm which will blow so hard."

He looked at her so pleadingly that Miss Rossiter's heart was moved, and she said:

"I like you, Howard, and know nothing against Edith as a woman. She is beautiful and you love her, and I daresay she is good, and I will be your friend. Tell me the story, please; is it about Gertie? She showed me your letter in which you called her your daughter. What does it mean?"

Mr. Schuyler glanced at his son, who was still sleeping quietly, then, drawing his chair closer to Miss Rossiter and speaking in the lowest possible whisper for her to hear, he told her the story from beginning to end. And Miss Rossiter neither fainted nor went into hysterics, but for her behaved remarkably well, and with the exception of a few ejaculations of amazement when the story was at the most exciting point never spoke a word until he had told her everything there was to tell. Then her first remark was:

"I am so glad it is Gertie. You need not be ashamed of her."

"Thank you, Christine," Mr. Schuyler said; "and now who will tell her, you or I, and when?"

"You, and as soon as she can bear it. I think she is too tired now, too much fatigued; she ought to have perfect rest. If I know Godfrey was out of danger I should take the girl home with me. Perhaps I had better do so even as it is," Miss Rossiter replied, wondering at herself and her interest in Gertie Westbrooke, and why she could not feel more indignant at that woman, who really had been in a way an impostor after all.

Miss Rossiter was peculiar, and often did things and took fancies which astonished those who knew her best. And this was one of her fancies. Mr. Schuyler had confided in her first, had told her everything, and asked her to stand by him, and she was going to, and would begin by being very kind to Gertie, toward whom she had been greatly drawn during the days and nights they had watched together by Godfrey's bedside.

After her conference with Mr. Schuyler was finished, and the doctor had been in and declared the danger past for Godfrey, she went to Gertie and Alice in the adjoining room and telling them the good news said to the former:

"Mr. Schuyler and myself both think it better for you now to go where you can have perfect rest and quiet for a few days, lest you take the fever also. My carriage will be here in an hour or so, you know it comes every day, and as I am not needed at present I shall go home and take you with me."

Gertie was lying on the couch, with her hands pressed to her head, which was aching terribly. But she put them away, and, lifting her heavy eyes wonderingly to Miss Rossiter's face, said:

"Go home with you? Do you wish it?"

"Certainly; I should not suggest it if I did not," Miss Rossiter answered.

And Gertie continued:

"But my—Mr. Schuyler—he has not told me yet. I must know about that before I can rest anywhere."

"Yes; but you must rest a little first, he says. You will need strength and courage both to hear what he has just told me," Miss Rossiter replied; and then, as Gertie was about to speak again, she added: "Not a word more at present. This afternoon, if he can leave Godfrey, he will come and tell you all."

And with this Gertie was obliged to be satisfied; and an hour later she was driven with Miss Rossiter to her handsome house, which she had never thought it possible for her to enter as she was entering it now.

Alice had decided to go to her Uncle Calvert's, and Gertie was alone with Miss Rossiter, who gave her the room at the back of hers, which Julia and Emma were to occupy, and where Alice slept when she was there.

And here, late in the day, Mr. Schuyler came, and was brought up by Miss Rossiter, who withdrew and left him alone with Gertie.

She was pale as marble, save where two bright red spots burned on her cheeks, and her eyes were heavy as lead, but they brightened with eagerness and excitement when Mr. Schuyler came in and drew his chair beside her as she lay upon the couch.

"Don't try to rise," he said, as she made an effort to sit up. "You are too tired and worn; keep as you are while I am talking to you. Gertie, it is a very strange story I am about to tell you, and, that it may come to you by degrees, I will tell you first why we went away so suddenly, and that when we went we had no thought of you, or that we should discover who you were. We were searching for another child."

Gertie was looking steadily at him, and her eyes never left his face while he told her the story, beginning with the time when he first asked Edith to be his wife, and she hinted at a page of her life of which she wished to tell him, and which, after so many years, had come to him by accident.

"I have the letter with me," he said; "I brought it on purpose to read to you, as it will tell the story so much better than I can."

Taking out Edith's letter he read it aloud, while Gertie's eyes deepened their gaze upon his face, and the red all died from her cheeks, which were of an ashen hue, and, when the letter was finished, he went on to tell that the child was not dead, as Edith had supposed, and of their search in London for it, which they gave at last into the hands of the police.

"Then, while we were waiting," he said, "I thought to make some inquiries about you at the office where your annuity is paid. There I heard of a Mrs. Westbrooke, recently from Florence, and to her we went at once, hoping she might know something of you, and she did. She was the second wife of a man who was not your father, but whose first wife adopted you when her own baby died. Her maid, Mary Stover, afterward Mrs. Rogers, told her of you, and brought you to her from her mother's, who had taken you from the foundling hospital where you had been left on the steps, and where Mary Stover's sister Anne was at that time nurse. Gertie, are you going to faint? Do you hear me? Do you understand?" he asked, alarmed at the expression of the face still confronting him so steadily, and never moving a muscle any more than if the features had been chiselled in stone.

"Yes, I think—I understand," came huskily from the livid lips; "that baby, born in Dorset Street, and left at the hospital, and sought for by you—and—and—her—was—was—me, and she—your—Mrs. Schuyler—is—my—mother—and—that—that grave I've tended always—is—my father's!"

She understood it perfectly, but Mr. Schuyler thought to make it clearer by saying:

"Yes, Gertie, you are the child of my wife, Mrs. Schuyler, and Abelard Lyle was your father!"

He opened the window, and carried Gertie to it and let the cool air blow on her, and dashed water on her face, and, but that he had seen Edith thus more than once, he would have thought her dead when he laid her back upon the couch and went to summon help.

Miss Rossiter watched with Gertie that night and many other nights, while the fever contracted at Godfrey's bedside, and brought to a crisis by the terrible shock which she had sustained, ran its course. There were a few moments' consciousness that first night, when Gertie's eyes opened and looked up at Miss Rossiter, who was bending over her.

"Am I very ill?" she asked, faintly, and Miss Rossiter replied:

"Yes; but we hope to have you well soon if you are quiet."

"Am I going to have the fever like Godfrey?"

"Yes, we think you are, though not so hard."

"Miss Rossiter, if I am very ill, very—I want her to come—mother—Mrs. Schuyler—you know."

"Yes, I know."

"And if I don't know her, if I never know her, tell her, please, that I have loved her since I first saw her that day a bride, and gave the flowers to her; and tell her, too, I've loved that Heloise Fordham ever since Miss Armstrong told me about her and the lover who died, and my name is Heloise, too—Gertrude Heloise—and there's a spot of blood right over my heart; she will find it there if I die."

"Yes, I will tell her."

"And tell Godfrey—oh, what message shall I leave for Godfrey? Tell him I loved him—more than he ever knew, but he must marry Alice for my sake. Tell him it was my wish."

"I'll tell him."

"And, Miss Rossiter, let me kiss you once, please, because you are so kind. I used to think you proud, and thought I did not like you, but I do now. I like everybody."

The kiss was given, and, strangest part of all, returned, for Miss Rossiter's heart was very soft toward the young girl, who, having said all she had to say, folded her hands upon her bosom, and whispered a little prayer she had learned when she was a child, sank into unconsciousness, from which she did not awake until the first April rains were falling, and there was a breath of coming summer in the soft spring air.

If that illness can be called pleasant when the fever runs so high that the pulse cannot be counted,

and the breath of life almost fleets away, then Gertie's illness was a pleasant one, and never sure before nor since was there a patient so docile, and quiet, and manageable as she, taking always what they bade her take, lying just where they put her, and seldom moving hand or foot save as they moved them for her.

Like Godfrey, she was out on the broad sea, sailing away to parts unknown, but with her there were no storms, no sudden lurches of the ship, no rollings, no pitchings, no swelling waves threatening to engulf her. All was smooth, and quiet, and calm as a river of glass, and the sun by day shone upon the water, flecking it with spots of gold, while the moon and stars at night looked down on the blue expanse, and lit it up with sheets of silvery light, into which Gertie went gliding, with Godfrey at her side—always Godfrey, who stood at the helm and managed the oars, and attended to the sails, and talked to her of love, which it was right for her now to accept.

In that pleasant dream there was no Alice in the way, no phosor to dissent, but all was bright and clear, and the boat went drifting on and on, always in moonlight or sunlight, always on a smooth still sea, till they came in sight of a far-off country, where golden streets and gates of pearl gleamed in the setting sun, and the boat paused mid stream, and waited whether the soul would cross to the beautiful city, or, turning, take the homeward route and come back to life again. It chose the latter, and bame slowly back, with sails all drooping and torn, and more ripples on the waves than had been in the journey out. Godfrey was no longer in the boat, Gertie had lost him somewhere, and was searching sadly for him until a voice, which sounded much like his, said to her:

"Gertie, I am here, and shall never leave you again."

Then her little plaintive moan, "Godfrey, oh, where is Godfrey?" ceased, and when she spoke again it was a beautiful woman, who, she thought, was standing by her, and calling her "my daughter." Oh, how that mother-love brooded over the poor girl, soothing, and quieting, and comforting her, and with its pleading prayers bringing at last the healing power which unlocked the sleeping senses and made Gertie whole again. For Edith was there with her, and had been since the second day of her illness, Mr. Schuyler having sent for her by telegram, saying:

"Gertie is very ill. Come immediately."

I was at Schuyler House when the telegram was received. In fact I had been there ever since the day of Edith's return.

"Stay with me, Ettie, while Mr. Schuyler is gone," she had said, calling me Ettie for the first time since she came to Schuyler Hill as Mrs. Schuyler, and seeming so anxious for my company that I consented to remain, and after Mr. Schuyler was gone we went up to her room where she paced up and down, up and down, with a restlessness for which I could not account, unless it came from anxiety for Godfrey.

At last I said:

"You are troubled about Godfrey, Mrs. Schuyler."

And she replied:

"Yes—no. I was not thinking of him, but of Gertie. Ettie, do you remember the people who lived in the cottage years ago, Mrs. Fordham and her daughter?"

"Yes," I replied, "I remember them well. Why do you ask me that question?"

She was standing by the window now, gazing wistfully at the cottage and the smoke curling from the chimney.

"Did you like that girl? Heloise was her name," she said, without answering my question.

"Yes," I answered, "I was very fond of her, and thought her so beautiful, and I have often wondered where she was that she neither came back nor wrote, when she promised to do both."

Crossing swiftly to my side and laying a hand on each of my shoulders, she looked me steadily in the eye, and said:

"Ettie, is there anything in my face which reminds you of that girl?"

Then it came to me like a flash of lightning; all the perplexity and wonder I had at times experienced with regard to Mrs. Schuyler was made clear, and without stopping to think how it could be and thinking only that it was, I said:

"You are Heloise!" while my knees shook so that I was compelled to sit down upon the nearest chair to keep myself from falling.

"Yes, I was Heloise Fordham once," she answered, her lip quivering and the great tears gathering in her eyes and rolling down her cheeks.

"Ettie," she continued, "I wanted to tell you so many times, but dared not, for until that illness of mine in November my husband did not know it."

At this I looked up in surprise, and she went on: "I asked you to stay with me that I might tell you the story first and let you break it to the people, for I will have no more concealments."

Then sitting down beside me she told me the whole story, and to my dying day I shall not forget the ringing sweetness and joy in her voice when she said:

"Gertie is my daughter."

I had heard the rest of the story with a tolerable degree of equanimity, but that last electrified me like the shock from a battery, and springing to my feet I exclaimed:

"Gertie your daughter! Gertie your child!"

"Yes, Ettie, Heaven has been so good to me, so good. And, oh, how I do love her, Ettie, and how hard it is for me to stay here and not go to her. But we thought it best for my husband to go first and tell her before I saw her. He offered to do that; he tries to spare me all he can; oh, he is so good and kind and has behaved so nobly through it all."

She was crying now and I did not try to stop her, for I knew tears would do her good. And she was calmer after it, and talked with me until long after midnight of the strange story and the old life at the cottage when we both were girls.

Early the next morning Mr. Schuyler's first telegram came:

"Godfrey is very ill, but out of danger, we hope. Miss Rossiter and Gertie both here; the latter well, but tired."

I doubt if Edith paid much attention to anything but the last of the telegram, the part relating to Gertie. This she read and re-read, as if there were a pleasure even in the sight of the dear name.

"You see Mrs. Westbrooke named her Gertrude after her own little girl who died," she explained to me, "and as she did not know whether she had been baptized or not she had her christened 'Gertrude Heloise Westbrooke,' so Westbrooke really is her name, and I am glad, for I know my husband would rather have it than 'Lyle.'"

After lunch came another telegram:

"Godfrey better. Gertie at Miss Rossiter's. Shall see her to-night."

That evening Edith was like a crazy woman, walking up and down, up and down the halls, and then through her suite of rooms and back again into the hall, clasping her hands tightly together, and whispering to herself:

"Is it now he is telling her? Does she know it yet? And what does she think of me, her mother? Will she call me by that name? Oh, Gertie, Gertie, if I could see you now. Heaven grant you do not hate me."

Suddenly she grew calm, and, ceasing in her walk, said to me:

"Something tells me it is over. Gertie knows the truth and does not hate me. Thank Heaven for that."

Edith slept that night, but was restless and impatient in the morning until the third message came:

"She knows everything and is very glad."

"Then why doesn't she come home? Why stay there when she is not needed?" Edith said, and all that day she was in a feverish state of expectancy when a train came in.

"Surely she will come now," she would say, and standing by the window she watched the road until all hope was gone, when, with a burst of tears, she turned away, saying, so sadly:

"Gertie has not come."

No, Gertie did not come, and the next day we read the words:

"Gertie is very ill; come immediately."

Then Edith frightened me, she turned so white and stood so still, while the iron fingers clutched her throat for the last time, and strangled her until her face was purple and floods of foam came from her quivering lips. I thought it was a fit, and rang for help, but before it came the fingers relaxed their grasp and the natural colour came back to her face, and Edith was herself again.

Fortunately it was her maid who answered the ring, and telling her of the despatch and that she was going to London, Edith bade her pack her travelling valise, and order the carriage for the next train, due in half an hour.

"Oh, Ettie," she cried, when we were alone, "Heaven will not take her from me now. Pray, pray that my Gertie may be spared."

I think she prayed constantly, while getting herself ready, for her lips moved continually, and I caught the whispered words: "Don't—don't," and knew she was pleading for Gertie's life.

I went with her to the station and saw her in the train, and then returned to the house, charged with the responsibility of acquainting the household and as many others as I saw fit with the story, which it was better to have known while the family was absent.

I found Mrs. Tiffe in her own room, and with her a Mrs. Noall, of whom there are always one or two in every town, gossiping women, who spend their time in hearing and retelling news, whom few like and everybody dreads.

In the case of Mrs. Noall, however, it was a little different. She was thoroughly good natured and

well meaning, and though she told all she knew she never told any more, and always told it as she heard it. Here then was a good opportunity for the news to be thoroughly disseminated without much help from me, farther than the telling it first to my auditors. And this it was easy to do, for they were talking of Mrs. Schuyler when I went in, and Mrs. Noall was wondering why when they came home that they both seemed so broken and worn. She surmised that Mr. Schuyler's finances were in a very precarious condition (Mrs. Noall had taught school in her youth, and always used the biggest words to express her meaning). She knew Mr. Schuyler had suffered heavy losses recently.

"It is not that," I said. "It is something entirely different which has troubled Mr. and Mrs. Schuyler, and I have come in on purpose to tell you, as Mrs. Schuyler wishes the people to know it before her return."

Then, taking a chair, I told the story of Edith's life, interrupted frequently by questions and ejaculations from my auditors, both of whom were more amazed and confounded than they had ever been in their lives before.

Mrs. Tiffe was the first to recover herself. She had the family dignity to maintain, and she was going to do it, and while she condemned the Fordham woman out and out she stood firm by Edith as more sinned against than sinning, and said that she for one thought more of her than ever, and that every right minded person would agree with her, of course.

Mrs. Noall, who was usually chary of offending Mrs. Tiffe, fully agreed with her, and both expressed unbounded delight that the lost child had proved to be Gertie Westbrooke, whom everybody loved.

"And that's what makes her ill, and why Mrs. Schuyler has gone to her. I see—yes, I understand," Mrs. Noall said, and though she had intended stopping to dinner with Mrs. Tiffe she declared that she must go at once, and she went, and to my certain knowledge made twenty calls before ten o'clock at night, and told the story twenty times without varying it in the least.

Of course there was nothing more for me to do except to answer the questions of those who came on purpose to inquire if what they had heard was true. Never before had I received so many calls within a given time as I did during the few days of excitement when Schuyler Hill was alive with the story, and reminiscences of the Fordhams were brought up and comments of various kinds were made according to the nature of those who made them.

I think Mrs. Barton from the Ridge was the most disturbed; she had spent the winter in Schuyler Hill, and she came to see me early, and stayed three hours, and talked the matter over, and wished that it had not been made public.

"At least it might have been a secret as to who the husband was. Nobody would ever have dreamed that it was some one here. It is too bad to thrust that beautiful Miss Westbrooke into the position of a carpenter's daughter. Entire uncertainty with regard to her parentage would have been better than that."

Mrs. Barton was a kind, good woman at heart, but very proud and particular about family and blood, and I knew she was thinking of Tom, who still avowed his intention to marry Gertie or nobody, and so I flamed up in Edith's defence, and said she was resolved to have no more concealments, that I had suggested to her the propriety of not telling who her first husband was, as that was sure to increase the talk and wonder.

"Mrs. Barton," I continued, "you ought to have seen her then, and heard how piteously she cried as she said to me, 'No, Ettie, I've thought that over, and talked it over with Mr. Schuyler, who is willing for me to do as I like. To conceal it would look as if I was ashamed of Abeldar, and I am not. He was my husband and I loved him, and Gertie and the world shall know who her father was.'"

"Noble woman!" Mrs. Barton exclaimed, crying a little herself. "I think she is right after all, and for one I shall stand by her."

Everybody stood by her, though everybody talked and wondered, and exclaimed, and suddenly remembered that they always thought there was something familiar in Mrs. Schuyler's face and Gertie's too. How anxious they were for news of poor Gertie, lying so dangerously ill, and how the daily telegrams sent to me were waited for.

At last the one word "Better" flashed along the wires. Gertie was better, and Edith was perfectly happy, and Julia was at Miss Rossiter's, and Godfrey was there too, with his father, and Miss Rossiter was covering herself with glory and developing a phase of character of which no one had ever dreamed.

(To be continued.)

THE WINE TRADE IN HESSE DARMSTADT.—The Grand Duchy of Hesse Darmstadt has resolved to set the trade in wine henceforth entirely free. For ten years to come wine merchants and innkeepers

are to pay at the rate of two-thirds of the present direct tax levied on their licences, after which it is intended that this should entirely cease. In all other respects, from the 1st of January, the wine trade throughout the Grand Duchy is put precisely on the same footing as the trade in bread and meat.

FACETIÆ.

A LADY accounts for changing her maids every year by saying that after that period she finds they become the mistresses of the house.

A FIVE-YEAR-OLD boy told his mother how to make butter: "You just take a long stick with a cross at the end of it; then you get a big tub, and then you borrow a cow."

AN amateur farmer wonders "why on all this fair earth the ground is spread bottom-side up, so that it must be turned over with a plough before crops can be raised."

BOXING.

Harry: "Bin Chris' mas-boxing much, Tommy?" Tommy: "No such luck! Doctor's busy, and I bin mainly pill-boxing."—*Fun.*

"GENTLEMEN of the jury, if you believe the plaintiff, the defendant is up a tree," said a judge the other day who is noted for being a genial and hearty gentleman by all who know him, and as this short oration doubtless will testify.

THE difference between having a tooth properly drawn by a professional surgeon, and having it knocked out miscellaneously by a fall upon the pavement, is only a slight verbal distinction—one is dental, and the other accidental.

"JOHN," said a schoolmaster, "you will soon be a man, and will have to do business—what do you suppose you will do when you have to write letters, unless you learn to spell better?" "Oh, sir, I shall put easy words in them."

FOGGED!

Country Servant (on the first appearance of the fogs this year): "Oh, ma'am, please, ma'am! the chimney is on fire, and James tells me every chimney in London is the same!"

PASSENGERS on one of the river steamers were much amused lately by reading the following notice, posted in the saloon: "Lost—a valise containing several manuscript sermons in writing, and other articles of clothing. Inquire of Rev. J. P."

DELICACIES OF THE SEASON.

Extremely High-Church Lady: "Oh, don't go away, Mr. Busby—we are just going to have Compliments!"

Mr. Busby: "Many thanks, my dear lady, but I couldn't eat another morsel!"—*Punch.*

AMERICAN WELCOME.—"Who's there?" said Jenkins, one cold winter night, disturbed in his repose by some one knocking at the street door. "A friend," was the answer. "What do you want?" "Want to stay here all night." "Queer taste—stay there by all means," was the benevolent reply.

A FAST WOMAN.—There is a woman clerk in the Treasury Department of the United States who can count 9,000 notes in an hour, and has counted 4,000 in twenty minutes. This may seem quick work, but we know a woman or two in England who could run through all those notes, and as many more as she could get, in the course of a few minutes.—*Fun.*

"TRANSFORMATION SCENE."

Good Templar: "Oh, dear no! Don't mention it! I never take anything—I—!"

Fiend (in human shape): "Nonsense! Christ-mas time! You'll take something—"

Templar: "Well, if you put it like that, I'll take—!"—*Punch.*

MUSIC AT HOME.

Mistress (who can't bear Kitchen Music): "Isn't that cook, Mary, singing 'The Minstrel Boy'?"

Maid: "Yes, ma'am."

Mistress: "I wish to goodness she'd leave off!"

Maid: "Yes, ma'am—so dreadful out of tune one can't join in, ma'am!"—*Punch.*

A PAR CRY.

Betty: "My! what a foine sermunt Mr. Jones preached yesterday! All the women folk was a weepin' and a cryin' quite beautiful to behold, 'cept old Tilda, from Oolstone—she didn't cry a bit!"

Sally: "Of course she didn't, stoopid. Don't she belong to another parish?"—*Fun.*

NOT TO BE HAD.

Little Brother: "I say, what are all those blue marks on your arm?"

Sister: "Veins, Charlie—blood vessels, you know."

J. B.: "Oh! come, I say! I've seen lots of vessels at Portsmouth when pa took me there! I know what a vessel is!"—*Fun.*

CAPITAL.—A country correspondent tells us that on the installation of a new vicar the clerk informed him that it was the usual custom to give something to the poor; whereupon the vicar replied he should

most certainly give them a largesse. "Please, sir," remarked the clerk, meekly, "I think they would prefer a little tea."—*Fun.*

A DEAL TOO SHARP.

Mother (to Son, home for his holidays): "What a pretty tie you have on, Frank!"

Son: "Yes, pretty fair."

Father: "What did it cost you?"

Son: "Twelve shillings and sixpence."

Mother: "Twelve shillings and sixpence! Why, what a profit those people must make!"

Son: "Yes, ties usually do pay the dealer."—*Fun.*

"ALL THE YEAR ROUND."

(A reminiscence of Boxing-day.)

Sir Gorgy Gussles: "Got a pain, have you? Well, serve you right! I cannot understand why you and the other servants should think it necessary to make pigs of yourselves on one particular day of the year, just because it happens to be the twenty-fifth of December!"

The Page: "Oh, sir, please, sir! Christmas makes no difference to you, sir. You and her ladship can perform that hoperation hevery blessed day of your lives, sir!"—*Punch.*

(A Month's Notice.)

THE WORLD IS NOT OLD.

Who says that the world is grown old,
And faded its primeval grace?
Some beauty of colour or form
In everything round me I trace.

This world is a glorious place:
How fragrant the flowers' perfume!
Just hark to the musical rills!
How soft on the fruit lies the bloom!

Who says that the world is grown old?
Why, even to live is delight!
A fountain of power and love
Is life when 'tis looked at aright.

The world is all smiling to-day,
The earth, and the sky, and the sea;
And smiling the faces of friends,
And one who's far dearer to me!

Who says that the world is grown old?
'Tis almost as fresh and as bright,
Prolific and teeming with life
As first, at the dawning of light.

Oh, beautiful world! our earth home!
All creatures, and ye of my kind!
What graces and virtues I see
When scattered the clouds of the mind!

H. Y. W.

GEMS.

LET friendship creep gently to a height. If it rushes to it, it may soon run itself out of breath.

MOST men work for the present, a few for the future. The wise work for both—for the future in the present, and for the present in the future.

THAT man only is truly brave who fears nothing so much as committing a mean action, and undauntedly fulfils his duty, whatever be the dangers which impede his way.

IN all evils which admit a remedy impatience should be avoided, because it wastes that time and attention in complaints which, if properly applied, might remove the cause.

A CONTEMPT of the sacred rite of marriage not only endangers the morality of the individual, but strikes at the very foundation of social order and domestic happiness.

HAPPINESS is a perfume which one cannot shed over another without a few drops falling on one's self. He that would make others happy must be happy himself.

We are often infinitely mistaken, and take the falsest measures, when we envy the happiness of rich and great men. We know not the inward canker that eats out all their joy and delight, and makes them really much more miserable than ourselves.

THE happiness of our lives depends much on the active performance of the duties of our station; nor have we any right to infer that, if they are properly discharged, they would be better if we moved in a more exalted sphere.

ACTION OF VIOLET LIGHT.—M. G. Raspini says that violet light has an extraordinary action on animal and vegetable life. Plants cultivated in conservatories made of violet glass grow with remarkable rapidity; and cattle kept in stables in which the windows are of violet glass increase rapidly in size and vigour. He proposes to apply these properties to man, and to use windows of violet glass in hospitals and schools for children, in order to assist the development of the children. He suggests that ex-

periments should be made on a large scale with silk-worms, and if the result be favourable, the method can be generally used in agriculture and hygiene.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

WHITE HANDS.—The best means to "whiten red hands" is to wear a pair of cosmetic gloves thus prepared: Fresh eggs, 2; oil of sweet almonds, 2 tea-spoonfuls; rose water, 1 oz.; tincture of benzine, 36 grains. First beat the eggs and oil together, and then add the rose-water and tincture. Well daub a pair of kid gloves with the mixture on the inside, and wear them during the night.

CHARLOTTE RUSSE.—This is usually made in a scalloped, oval tin mould, three inches in depth, but a quart tin pan can do duty for it. Dissolve one large tablespoonful of gelatine in two-thirds of a tumbler of new milk, boiling it slowly, having first wetted the gelatine with two tablespoonfuls of cold water, and soak it ten minutes, as this makes it dissolve more readily in the boiling milk, which can be heated as the gelatine soaks. Add to it two large tablespoonfuls of white sugar. Beat three eggs well, and when the gelatine is melted, and the milk cooled enough not to curdle them, stir in carefully. Add one teaspoonful of extract of vanilla, or lemon; then strain through a sieve. Cut sponge-cake into slices half an inch thick, and fit them neatly and closely into the dish, covering the bottom of it first. Beat up a pint of thick cream with the milk and eggs, already prepared, until it is well frothed. Do it either with a whip-churn or egg-beater. Set the mould into a pan filled with pounded ice or salt; turn in the beaten mixture; cover it with very thin slices of cake. Place another pan over it; set it in a cool place for three or four hours, or as much longer as you desire, and you will have a delicious dish at a cheap rate.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE journals of Venetia announce the death of a man 109 years old, at Montebello-Maggiore (Venezia). He leaves a wife aged ninety-four.

A TAX of twopences a day on all foreigners in France is one of the financial expedients on the tapis.

THE death of the Earl of Norbury is announced. He succeeded to the earldom on the murder of his father in 1839.

It is stated that it will require about 60,000,000*l.* to replenish the French arsenals, re-arm the forts and troops, etc.

A CHIROPODIST announces on his cards that he has "removed corns from several of the crowned heads of Europe." Funny place for corns.

THE executor of the will of the late ex-Duke Charles of Brunswick has commissioned the sculptor Vincenzo Vela, a native of Italy, to execute the monument ordered in the will.

AN admirable statue of Hercules was discovered a few days ago at Esquiline. It is larger than life, and is intact, with the exception of the feet and left arm, which are broken.

THREE tons of beads and three hundred pairs of handcuffs are part of a very miscellaneous consignment just shipped in the "Elizabeth Martin" for the seat of war in West Africa.

THE King of Siam has for ever abolished that most ancient of Siamese customs—the prostration of the body upon the ground before superiors. Thus a little diplomatic difficulty for Europeans has been got over.

THE quantity of meat received at the Metropolitan Meat Market on Monday before Christmas was 1,095 tons, this being nearly 100 tons in excess of the consignments of any previous day. The average daily weight of the meat and poultry received during the year is 500 tons.

THE Emperor of Germany has conferred upon Miss Anna Thacker, of Wolverhampton, the war medal with ribbon, and the insignia and diploma of this decoration, for services rendered to the sick and wounded in the hospital at Cologne. This is in addition to the cross already received by Miss Thacker.

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN has graciously consented to lend pictures by Wilkie, "The Blindman's Buff," "The Penny Wedding," "The Siege of Saragossa," "The Guerilla's Departure," "The Guerilla's Return," "Guerilla's Council," and others, in all nine pictures, to the Art Instruction Department of the London International Exhibition of 1874, which will illustrate the career of artists.

THE following are the results of the competitions in connection with the Royal Academy of Music:—Westmoreland Scholarship, Miss Emma L. Beasley, re-elected; £1. each (from the Academy funds) towards the cost of a year's instruction in the institution, awarded to Miss M. A. Williams, Miss Rhoda E. Barkley, and Miss Henrica Van Sonden; Potter Exhibition, Mr. Walter Fitton, elected.

CONTENTS.

Page	Page
CHRISTMAS BEFORE AND BEHIND THE CURTAIN 289	THE WORLD IS NOT OLD 311
SAFFRON GROWING IN FRANCE 292	GEMS 311
EGGINS AREW 292	HOUSEHOLD TREASURES 311
SHIPPING SANDS 293	MISCELLANEOUS 311
THE FORESTER'S DAUGHTER 296	No.
A LABOUR OF LOVE 298	EDITH LYNE'S SECRET, continued in 331
FATE 301	SHIPPING SANDS, com- menced in 331
WHO IS HE? 304	FATE, commenced in 340
SCIENCE 307	WHO IS HE? com- menced in 341
SCREED PAVEMENT 307	THE FORESTER'S DAUGHTER, com- menced in 349
TAS VIRGARI POLY 307	A LABOUR OF LOVE, continued in 354
THE SEA MOUSE 307	CHRISTMAS BEFORE AND BEHIND THE CUR- TAIN, commenced in 355
THE PLANET ATROPOS 307	
RECENT GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES 307	
AGNES LANE 308	
EDITH LYNE'S SECRET 309	
FACTS 311	

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

P. S.—In the usual manner.

A SHIPWRIGHT.—Apply to any scientific bookseller.

ANAK.—Apply at the Royal Free Hospital, Gray's Inn Road.

MAGGIE MAY.—Try your chance; state the case in the usual manner; and the announcement shall duly appear.

S. P. S.—The quotation "Coming events cast their shadows before" is by Campbell, and occurs in his poem Lochiel's Warning.

GEORGE.—The name George signifies the earth-worker or agriculturist. In this sense it is connected with Virgil's poem, called the Georgics from its relation to agricultural pursuits.

RED, RED ROSE.—Try violet powder, and in cold weather wear always a veil. The symptoms you mention may, however, indicate indigestion; and if so a little medicine might be found of material service.

JOHN.—We certainly could not undertake to solve puzzles for our readers. Besides, the work should be honestly your own; though we are bound to add that five shillings seems a small reward for all that intellectual exertion. But true genius is ever modest!

A CONSTANT READER.—It would require careful local inquiry at the several places, London, Glasgow, and Manchester, and even then—as the time is remote—you would probably fail to get the information you require. There were local secretaries. The fund, we rather think, like most public funds, was grossly mismanaged.

ANTIQUARY.—Paston Letters, the correspondence of a respectable family, 1422-83, giving a picture of social life in England, were edited by Sir James Fenn and published in five volumes quarto 1787-1823. Their authenticity was questioned September, 1865, but was satisfactorily vindicated by a committee of the Society of Antiquaries in May, 1866. Parts of the MSS. were soon after purchased by the trustees of the British Museum.

ALCESTIS.—Edward Oxford, a youth who had been a servant in a public-house, discharged two pistols at Queen Victoria and Prince Albert as they were proceeding up Constitution Hill in an open phaeton from Buckingham Palace, 10 June, 1840. He stood within a few yards from the carriage; but neither Her Majesty nor the Prince was injured. Oxford was tried at the Old Bailey, 10th July, was adjudged to be insane and sent to Bethlehem Hospital.

R. R.—Paul's Cross (London), which stood before the Cathedral, was a pulpit formed of wood, mounted upon steps of stone, and covered with lead, from which the most eminent divines were appointed to preach every Sunday in the forenoon. To this place the Court, the mayor, the aldermen and principal citizens used to resort. It was in use as early as 1359, and was appropriated not only to preaching but to political and ecclesiastical discourses, etc. Jane Shore, mistress of Edward IV., was brought before this cross in 1483, divested of all her splendour. The cross was demolished in 1643 by order of the parliament.

L. S.—At an auction by inch of candle persons continued to bid while a small piece of candle was burning, the article being knocked down to the person who made the last offer before it was extinguished. In excommunication by inch of candle the sentence was not passed upon the offender if he repented before the candle burned out. Shakespeare (2 Hen. IV., ii. 4) alludes to the old custom practised by the amorous and certainly immensely "spooney" gallant who "drinks off candles ends for flap dragons." On this passage Nares remarks that as a feat of gallantry, to swallow a candle's end formed a more formidable and disagreeable flapdragon than any other substance, and therefore afforded a stronger testimony of zeal for the lady to whose health it was drunk.

X. X. Q.—To avoid errors in computing and printing logarithms and tables of figures, machines to calculate and print have been devised. Pascal, when nineteen years of age, invented one about 1650. The construction of Mr. C. Babbage's machine was commenced at the expense of the Government in 1821 and continued until 1838 when the work was suspended after an expenditure of about 15,000l. The portion completed is in the museum of King's College, London. In 1857 Messrs. E. and S. Schantz, two Swedish engineers, published in London specimen tables, calculated and printed by machinery, constructed between 1837-1843 after a study of the account of Mr. Babbage's machine. Messrs. Schantz brought their machine to England in 1854. It was bought for 1,000l. by Mr. J. F. Rathbone, an American merchant, to be presented to Dudley Observatory in his own town, Albany. In 1857 Messrs. Schantz were engaged to make one for the British Government which is now completed.

Mr. Wiberg's machine exhibited at Paris Feb., 1861, was much commended. Tables constructed by means of Schantz's machine and edited by Dr. Farze were published by the Government in 1861.

E. E. R.—Which is to be preferred, light or dark hair? Which, indeed? We are (on the whole) inclined to say both; and chacun a son gout, as the French proverb teaches. The Net Brown Maid is the title of a very fine old song in Bishop Percy's collection; and the Roman and the Hebrew beauties were generally brunettes. Still, the blondes we think carry the palm, and the majority of poets are of that opinion. For whom blindest thou in wreaths thy golden hair? Is said of the Roman Pyrrha; and Roman ladies indeed, like modern English beauties, indulged largely in certain auriferous fluids. So too did the beauties of mediæval Italy. A look of the exquisite hair of Lucrezia Borgia is preserved in a dainty little case in the museum at Milan. It was golden, and no wonder that it played havoc even with virgins and agascious cardinals. And Adam Ferguson bore around his neck in a little locket the hair of Madame de Staël. Still, we repeat it is all a matter of opinion; and we might offend some of our esteemed readers by expressing any marked partiality. Any man of taste must have often admired both blondes and brunettes. Men insensible to feminine fascinations are usually bad fellows, and generally turn out ill.

CHARLES S.—In all strictness there is no such a thing as Chance. Nothing happens as apart from causation, and nothing without the knowledge, the consent or acquiescence, and the scrutiny, and in some sense the ordination of the Personal Deity. According to Zschylus it is the prerogative of the gods to inflict suffering; according to Horace the saving of his life from the falling of a tree and from the savage attack of a wolf in his Sabine grounds rescued him from a false philosophy and induced him to acknowledge a merciful interposition; according to Shakespeare there is a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough how we wish. This belief is the noblest consolation and the strongest support to a man amid the struggles and the vicissitudes of his life. Even mathematically there is a doctrine of chances, and the game of Chess is to be explained and calculated by known and fixed laws. The shallow sophistry which talks of chances is only equalled by the still shallower sophistry which professes belief in a law while denying a personal lawgiver. In these days men's fancies are apt to run riot, wholly apart from calm and reverent investigation. As a result we have theories (Evolution, Biology, Reigns of Law, etc.) which completely rival each other in their excesses of fantastic folly. Chance, in this connection, is a convenient word in conversation, but it is not allowable in strict reasoning.

BY MOONLIGHT.

Oh, melancholy woods! that lift
Your crownless forehead to the Night,
Where, ghostly white, the moonbeams drift,
And fade beyond the windy height.
No more the joyous thrill and stir
Of green tumultuous leaves are heard,
Nor dimpling laugh, nor glance and whirr
Of sylvan brook or summer bird.

I weep, oh, crownless woods! but not
For your green glory past away—
For bird and brooklet that forgot
Dull Autumn, in the arms of May;
For Nature's tender, wooing voice
Shall call her darlings back again,
And bid the wide green world rejoice
In glad sunshine and silver rain.

I mourn for the untimely blight
Of hopes that faded with the flowers—
The stricken faith, the lost delight
That crowned the rosy summer hours;
For, sadder than the fallen leaf
And all the wintry winds that cry,
I mourn the friendship bright as brief,
Born, with the summer flowers, to die!

E. E. A. B.

L. V., thirty, 5ft. 8in., dark, and amiable, desires to correspond with a lady of education, and means.

HESSIE, twenty-three, medium height. Respondent must be dark, tall; a mechanic preferred.

RICHARD, twenty-one, 5ft. 5in., fair complexion, and fond of home. Respondent must be about twenty, and fond of home and children.

MAT T., nineteen, tall, pretty, and possessing an income of 400l. per annum. Respondent must be tall, gentlemanly, and between twenty and thirty.

LAURA, nineteen, fair, loving, and domesticated. Respondent must be tall, with brown eyes and hair, educated, and over twenty, and fond of home.

LILY, eighteen, medium height, brown hair, complexion fair. Respondent must be tall, dark; a sailor preferred.

FRED, twenty-two, 5ft. 6in., and dark complexion. Respondent must be about twenty-one; one with some knowledge of music preferred.

MAUDE, eighteen, tall, brunette, and blue eyes, desires to correspond with a gentleman, loving, and fond of home.

ANNIE, nineteen, a draper's assistant, light-brown hair and eyes, fair complexion, desires to correspond with a gentleman, tall, dark, and possessing a small income.

SARRETTACHE, 6ft. 11in., a soldier in the 1st Dragoons, dark, and considered good looking, desires to correspond with a young lady of good looks and thoroughly domesticated.

LOVING AMY, twenty-four, medium height, fair complexion, brown hair, and thoroughly domesticated, and has a small income. Respondent must be tall, dark, and a sergeant in the 17th Lancers preferred.

ANNIE AND LIZZIE. "Annie" twenty-five, "Lizzie" twenty-four, tall, fair complexion, wish to correspond with two respectable young men, who must be tall, dark complexion, and seamen in the Royal Navy.

LIZZIE, tall, fair, brown hair, and gray eyes, of a loving disposition, and domesticated. Respondent must be dark, not older than twenty-five, and a gardener preferred.

JACK, thirty, 5ft. 5in., dark hair, considered good look-

ing, in a good position, desires to correspond with a London young lady, who must be tall, a blonde, and not over his own age.

WAITING PASSAGE, twenty-one, 5ft. 6in., a seaman in the Royal Navy, fair complexion, auburn hair, and blue eyes. Respondent must be about twenty-one, tall, dark, and domesticated.

LOVELY BACKLON, twenty-three, dark, considered handsome, tall, and possessing a competent income. Respondent must be about nineteen, and a good house-keeper.

FAN, eighteen, a draper's assistant, with brown hair, light-blue eyes, good tempered, and fond of home. Respondent must be about the same age and receiving a moderate salary.

IDA, a pretty brunette, fascinating, an excellent musician, with a loving heart, desires to correspond with a handsome, well-educated young gentleman about twenty-four or thirty, who will endeavour to make her happy.

META, nineteen, a blonde, considered handsome, an accomplished musician, and of a very loving disposition, desires to correspond with a handsome, well-educated young gentleman between twenty-four and thirty, who will endeavour to make her happy.

SCOTLAND, 5ft. 6in., good looking, energetic, affectionate, of business habits, and holding a good situation. Respondent must be thoroughly domesticated, and about the same height, good looking, and must live in or near Manchester.

BOOTS AND SPURS, twenty-five, 5ft. 10in., fair complexion, blue eyes, considered good looking, and a troop sergeant the 18th Hussars, at present at Umballa, India, would like to correspond with a young lady about twenty-one, who must be fond of dancing, and one with a little money preferred.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

ALPHONSO is responded to by—"A. Y. S.," twenty-three, tall, fair, good looking, and fond of home.

H. T. by—"Topsy."

SOLUS by—"Florence T."

J. W. by—"Allie," twenty-six, possessing a small income, and is of a loving disposition.

WILL-O'-THE-WISB by—"K. V.," medium height, of a cheerful and loving disposition.

SENSELESS by—"M. F.," who is a dressmaker, and thinks she would suit him.

ETHEL S. by—"W. B.," a sergeant in the Army, 5th Fusiliers, tall, dark, and affectionate.

DON CARLOS by—"Kitty H.," nineteen, dark-brown hair and eyes, loving and domesticated.

SOLDIER by—"Lilly," twenty, auburn hair, and gray eyes.

RICHARD B. by—"Selina," twenty, fair, pretty, and occupying the capacity that he desires.

HEDLEY V. by—"Ada D.," pretty, fair, of musical tastes, and domesticated.

JACK by—"Jemima L.," fair, and considered good looking.

SHANGHAI by—"Louise," dark, and thoroughly domesticated.

AGNES M. by—"W. H.," who thinks he answers her description.

ROSA by—"Jacobus," thirty, dark, affectionate, and fond of home and children.

EMMA by—"J. T. R.," twenty, in a good position, and fair complexion.

VICTOR H. by—"Marian C.," twenty-three, medium height, accomplished, and thoroughly domesticated.

DICK J. by—"Gertie C.," dark, pretty, and would make a loving wife.

W. J. G. by—"G. E. B.," eighteen, medium height, dark, and thoroughly domesticated.

GUS by—"N. H. S.," eighteen, fair, and thoroughly domesticated.

SAND BAG JACK by—"Jenny," twenty, 5ft. 2in., good figure, brown hair, and gray eyes.

A. B. O. by—"Harriet L.," pretty, good tempered, and domesticated.

SCROOPES SAIL JACK by—"Nellie," twenty, loving, considered good looking, dark hair and eyes, and thoroughly domesticated.

CHARLES B. by—"Clochette," twenty, in the same capacity as he desires, and would make him a loving little wife.

OFFICERS' GIG by—"Curly Alice," seventeen, medium height, dark hair, hazel eyes, considered good looking, very fond of dancing, and is thoroughly domesticated.

M. A. T. by—"X. Y. Z.," twenty-six, loving disposition, considered good looking, and thoroughly domesticated.

COASMO AND ALBERT by—"Emily and May," ages respectively nineteen and twenty-two, pretty, well educated, proficient in music, and thoroughly domesticated, having small incomes of their own.

ALL the BACK NUMBERS, PARTS and VOLUMES of the "LONDON READER" are in print and may be had at the Office, 334, Strand; or will be sent to any part of the United Kingdom Postfree for Three-halfpence, Eightpence, and Five Shillings and Eightpence each.

EVERYBODY'S JOURNAL, Parts 1 to 4, Price Threepence each.

THE LONDON READER, Post-free Three-halfpence Weekly; or Quarterly One Shilling and Eightpence.

* * Now Ready VOL. XXI. of THE LONDON READER. Price 4s. 6d.

Also, the TITLE and INDEX to VOL. XXI. Price One Penny.

NOTICE.—Part 123, for JANUARY, Now Ready, price 6d.

N.B.—CORRESPONDENTS MUST ADDRESS THEIR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR OF "THE LONDON READER," 334, Strand, W.C.

†† We cannot undertake to return Rejected Manuscripts. As they are sent to us voluntarily, authors should retain copies.

London: Published for the Proprietor, at 334, Strand, by G. A. SMITH.